

伝説の勇者の伝説 3

非情の安眠妨害

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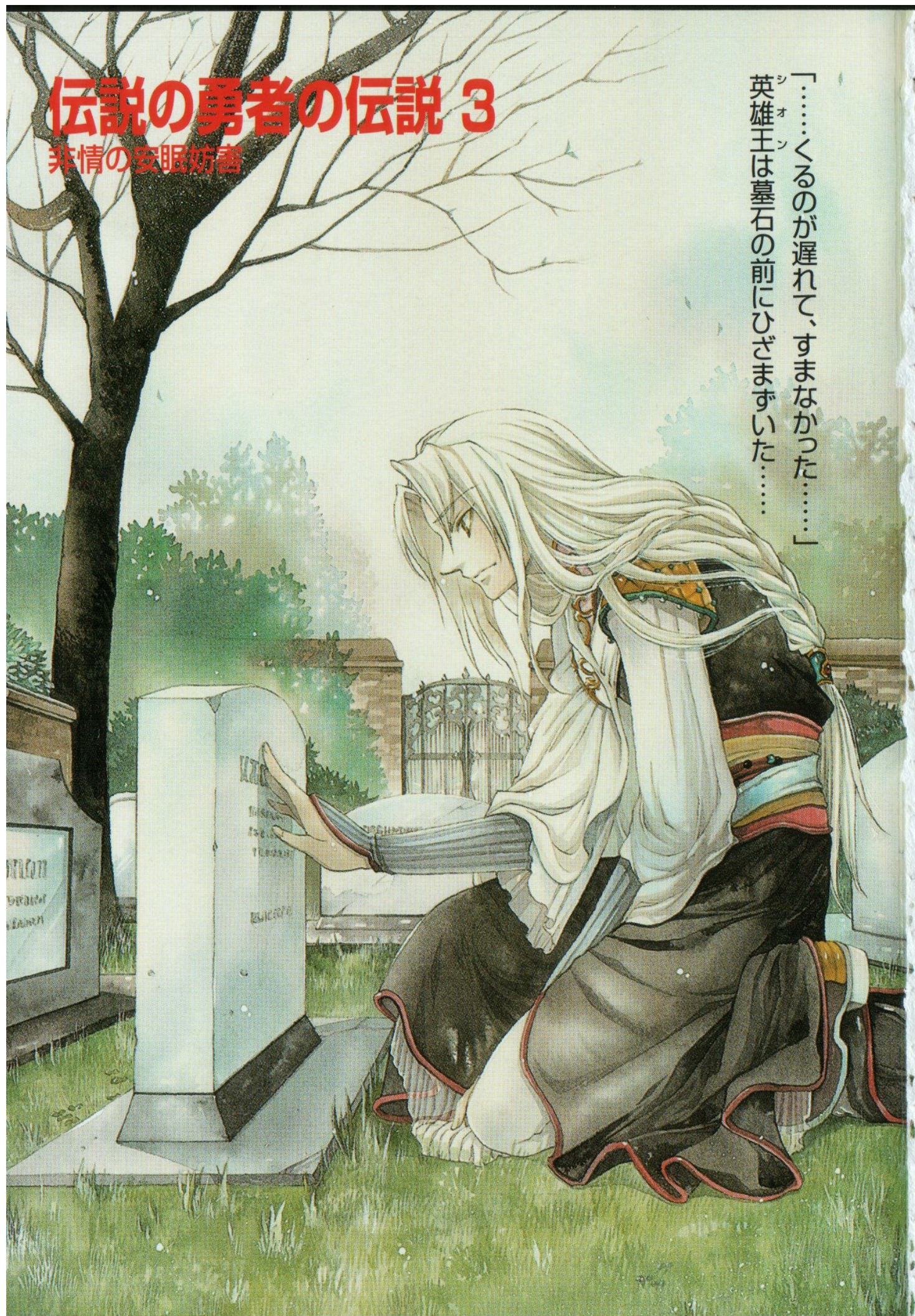
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「……くるのが遅れて、すまなかった……」
英雄王は墓石の前にひざまずいた……





「……あなたまさか、ライナ!?」
それがわかった瞬間、ミルクはめまいを感じた。



Prologue 1: Within a breaking dream

She could still recall that dream of the past. It was a very distant past.

“Do you understand? Grab my hand and don’t let go of it!” The dream with that boy’s loud shout...

At that moment, the girl only—could only—stand there, in a blank daze.

“...”

Dead.

Everyone, everyone was dead.

This place was filled with death.

Storm, thunder, fire had burned everyone...

Laughing adults.

Fleeing children.

Those who cried, shouted, begged for mercy, weak—all would be killed.

The girl only—could only—cry sluggishly.

“This kind of thing... already...”

Hate, exhaustion. It was repeated every day, this mass-slaughter that was called training. Only those who survived the mass-slaughter were allowed to continue living in the orphanage.

“No... This kind of thing, I hate...”

The friends she had talked with the day before now collapsed before her eyes, already dead. Incessantly, not stopping, her friends—no, her kin who lived in the same orphanage with her were killed. With the scene repeatedly unfolding in front of her eyes, she had no choice but to continue running. For the sake of protecting this life that may be ended the next day, she had no

choice but to continue escaping...

But she had enough of this.

“It doesn’t matter anymore.”

She stopped moving when she thought that. She stopped thinking.

The adults in front of her only watched on, laughing and smiling...

“Those who have given up shall die.”

A sword was unsheathed and raised up in the air.

She still didn’t move. If she didn’t do anything now, she would die. She was very clear about that, but she didn’t move. Because...

Death was certainly better than living...

This way, she wouldn’t need to watch her friends die. This way, she would not fear the long, sleepless nights caused by her fear of death. She could relax now... But...

“Idiot! What are you doing!?”

“Ah?”

Suddenly, she was kicked by someone from behind her.

At that moment, her body was flung far away... The sword swung down sharply, but it passed through thin air. She turned her head back immediately. A black-haired boy was standing there. He was beaten down by the training officer who glared at him.

“What are you doing? Do you still have the strength to not die in this place?”
He said.

The girl recognized the boy. In the Roland #307 Special Training Facilities, he was a famous youngster. Black hair and black eyes; a fit and lightweight body, and a pretty face that held a sense of righteousness.

Ryner Lute.

Excellent results and a clear mind. Abnormally high combative abilities and magical knowledge. And an outstanding ability to survive.

He had always been the perfect exemplary model in this orphanage. Everyone always said that they aspired to become an existence like him.

He was different.

He received special treatment from the orphanage.

A perfect fighting machine.

No troubles.

No fears.

No mayhem.

She had always thought to become an existence like his. Even if she faced someone who was dying, she would not feel sad. Regarding her own death, she would not feel fear. If it were that easy...

But this boy looked at her. "Look out, you might go flying if I hit you. You could have avoided dying, so don't go seeking death!"

"...Ah?"

She didn't understand what he was talking about.

He seemed angry...

But that Ryner Lute could never lose his temper...

Yes, they had been taught this way.

But he still—

"What are you talking about..."

Upon hearing this, he became agitated. "What do you mean 'what am I talking about'? According to your results, aren't you still going to die here? Even so, live on! Continue living, don't think about dying, even though there are many people who will continue dying, don't be so flighty!"

What is he telling me...

Why do my tears flow down my face...

"...Fli-flighty...? But I don't want to see everyone dying..."

But she stopped halfway. The boy's face held a sad expression.

He whispered, almost moaning, "...I also don't...wish to see this. So..."

At the same time he said this, the dead people surrounding them continued to increase.

People were dying.

People were dead.

Ryner closed his eyes after seeing this. The supposedly emotionless battle machine, Ryner Lute held a grieving expression within his eyes... Looking at him, she couldn't help herself but stop breathing momentarily.

He, too, was human.

He would mourn for his comrades' deaths. He would mourn for the deaths of humans. He would feel depressed because of his inability to save them. He would feel depressed because he survived.

'He's like me...' She thought. He was exactly like her. Both feeling the same pain and grief.

But he still wished to continue living.

As long as they had the energy to continue living, he would wish that they not die. If it was not like that... he would be unable to bear the guilty feelings he felt, knowing that he alone had survived... He had been an existence worshipped by the staff of the orphanage. She had thought that if she became like him, then she would have trouble-free and admirable life. But the him that fit this scenario did not exist. The real him did not seem to be strong...

When she realized this, she was disappointed. In the end, there was no such thing as a trouble-free, perfect existence. Every day would be spent in agony—extreme agony—so she had wanted to become like him. But even he had similar troubles...

"But..." she whispered.

Ryner opened his eyes that had contained his sadness, turned around and stepped to his side. Lightning struck the exact position that he had been standing in just a moment ago...

An incredible action.

He had actually dodged the lightning magic. It was as if his eyes could see it. He could even accomplish such an incredible matter.

If someone could truly accomplish this, they would have to have something like the ability to predict the future... Or something that could see magic...

At that moment, she realized it.

In his black eyes, there was a red five-pointed star...

Five-pointed star... A special pair of eyes whereby a red five-pointed star appeared.

She knew what that kind of eyes was.

It was called 'Alpha Stigma'. The people who had these were often cursed by others; they were called monsters. Everyone felt fear and hatred towards the Alpha Stigma bearers and called them monsters.

He used that five-pointed star to scan their surroundings, then he turned his head back to her... He noticed where she was looking. She was staring at his eyes. In that moment, he covered his eyes as if he wanted to hide everything.

"Ah... Urgh..." A small moan. That was the sound of fear. The sound of fearing others knowing.

But... She smiled at him. She already understood everything. He was not perfect. He, like her, carried their own troubles... This was not the time to be yearning for something she would never have...

He was fragile, and he was begging me for help.

She slowly reached out her hand.

He widened his eyes in surprise.

"..."

Then he reached forward and pulled her to her feet.

People were dying.

People continued dying.

He looked around again, this battleground—

He said, “Do you understand? Grab onto my hand and don’t let go of it!”

Because of what he said, she swore not to let go of his hand.

For fear of him being called a monster by others.

For fear of him falling apart.

Chapter 1: A promise for the future

“... I say... Do you understand the meaning of forlorn?”

“Does it refer to the Ryner Lute who attacks forlorn women—that forlorn?”

“... Why do you raise that example? ... Ah, forget it. Then, do you understand the meaning of meaningless?”

“The reputation of the criminal: the meaningless pervert Ryner Lute has been quite widespread lately.”

“It hasn’t... Ah, I’m not talking about that...” Ryner Lute sighed weakly.

Their location was in forest of the Imperial Nelpha. It was morning.

He had a mop of black hair that was thoroughly mussed by sleep and a lanky body. He was an existence that defied the word motivated. For unknown reasons, he only wore the white armor, special armor and cloak that only the mage knights of the Roland Kingdom were allowed to wear... Even though it was battle uniform, as long as he wore it, it would look like a rolled up blanket...

Those sleepy black eyes were now aimed at the gap between the forest trees where he could vaguely overlook the fortress-like buildings. He watched for a while then he turned back.

Standing behind him was a beautiful girl. An unbelievably beautiful girl who sat on a tree-stump.

The sun-rays filtered through the gaps between the tree leaves and shone upon her blond hair. Her big eyes were a striking cyan. An exceptionally beautiful face. She wore leather armor and around her waist was a sword that was disproportionately bigger than her slender arm.

She was the splendid epitome of beauty.

Although her emotionless face was something to be minded...

But her cold beauty was one of the elements of her attractiveness.

Not only was she a beauty. Her posture was that of a goddess. A beauty goddess. Just by looking at her, everyone would express their gratitude and worship this divine beauty...

But when Ryner looked at her, he would only sigh and have a speechless expression.

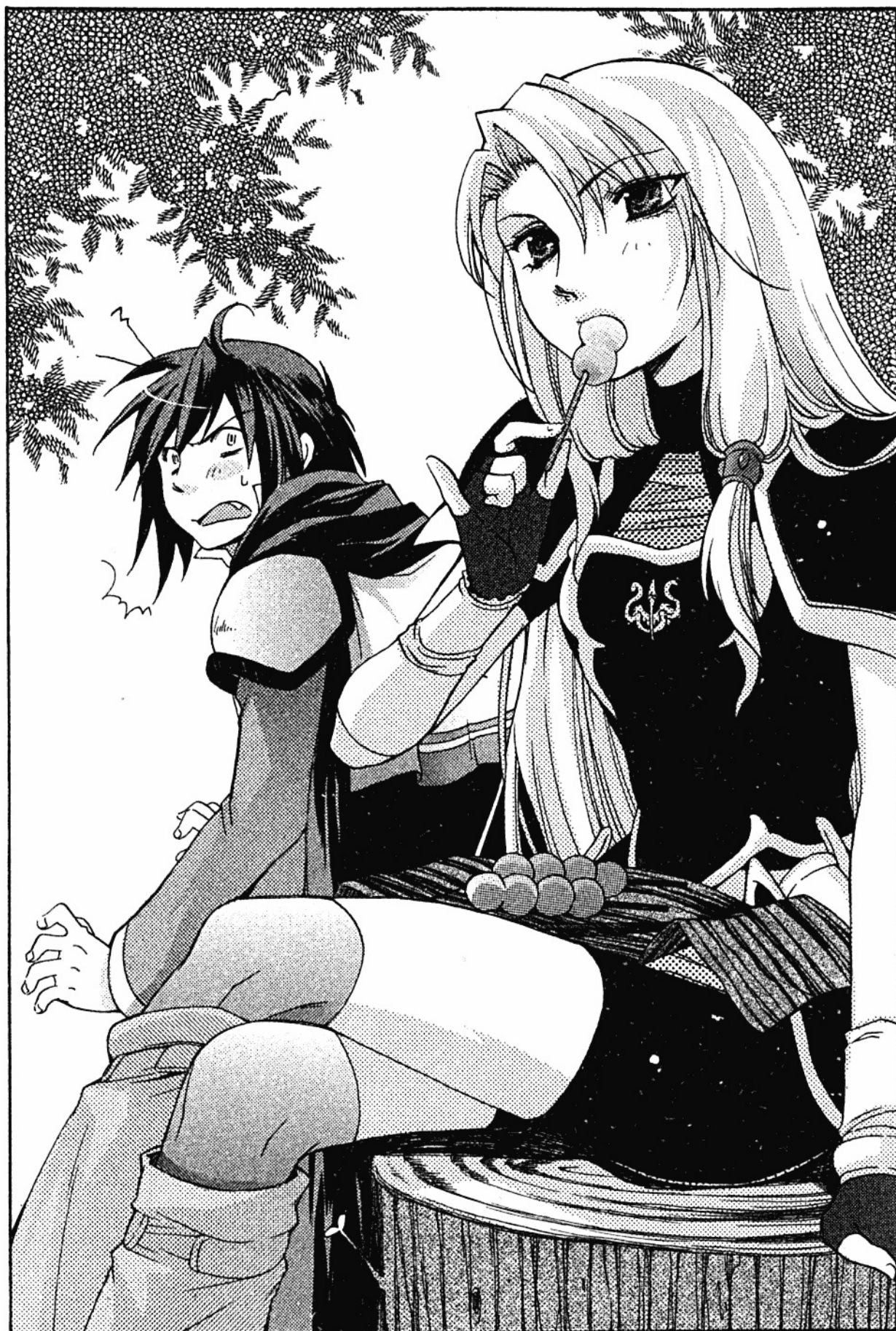
“... I say, are you seriously listening to me?”

She looked at him with a slightly serious expression, “Eh? Your words disappoint me. I feel slightly... hurt by your words. I have always been serious. Why would you ask... [sounds of talking while eating]?”

“Don’t eat when you’re talking!!!!”

Yes.

The beauty goddess, Ferris Eris was now busy eating dangos.



Ryner breathed in deeply once again.

“How serious can you be when you’re eating dangos and trying to talk at the same time?” Ferris replied in a straightforward manner, “Eh, you doubt the dangos’ tr-...”

“Nonsense!” Ryner shouted with an annoyed expression, “Never mind, continue eating your dango and listen to me. Can you see that, is that a fortress?”

“Yes.”

“Although I feel like it can be easily identified as a fortress just by looking at it, but I can see that there are many Imperial Nelpha soldiers guarding the area. That isn’t an illusion I’m seeing, right?”

“Yes.”

“That means the security over there is strong. And there are many soldiers protecting that place. Although this is understood because the legend says that, that place is a treasure trove for this area’s important relics. So the country has ordered to protect that place, right?”

“Yes, yes.”

“Then, let me ask you this once. Don’t you think the both of us infiltrating that place, then stealing the relics inside is a very forlorn and meaningless matter? I’ve been asking you that since just now... What do you think?”

“...”

Ferris closed her eyes, seeming as if she were deep in thought over Ryner’s words. She stuffed the last dango into her mouth and drank her tea after eating it. After finishing her snack, she stood up.

“Today’s dangos were scrumptious. Alright, let’s go.”

“Ah?! Then what about I said just now?”

Ferris displayed a slight twitch, “What is it? If you wanted that share of dango, there isn’t any more, you know?”

“I’m not talking about that!” At that moment that Ryner yelled, there was a

sharp 'whoosh',

Ferris's sword was unsheathed at a rate that even the naked eye could catch and settled at Ryner's neck.

"Ah..." Ryner whimpered.

Ferris said, "I didn't pay attention to what you were saying. Since there is a possibility that the Heroes' Relics that we are searching for can be found there, then we must go and search. Didn't you write that in your report? That you can't let the dangerous power of the Heroes' Relics fall into the hands of countries apart from the Roland Kingdom..."

Ryner half-closed his eyes and continued the seemingly grand proclamation, "And if we don't listen to the unreasonable orders of Sion, the dango shop in the Roland Kingdom that you love will be forced to close, right? I have heard this many times."

"Exactly. That excessively tyrannical King has endangered my important dango shop's fate. If I don't protect the peace of the dangos, then who would take up this duty of protecting them?"

Ryner looked at the enthusiastic Ferris and felt faint again. "Ah... About that, I won't ask you about dangos... But even then, charging in without a plan, don't you feel that that's very dangerous?"

Ferris sheathed her sword and looked at Ryner.

"Yes. Are you serious about what you said?"

Saying this kind of stuff...

"Ah? What do you mean?"

"I'm saying, with that standard of security, do you seriously think that it's hard to break through?"

Ryner took one look at the fortress, then he folded his hands in front of his chest and lapsed into deep thought.

"..." He thought for a while. Then,

"Ah~ Let me change my views. About that, when I woke up this morning, I had

an ominous feeling. Don't we have this kind of feelings often? So this morning when I woke up, I thought 'Ah, I don't feel like going to school today, it's so troublesome,' then when I thought about it, I started to have a stomach ache..."

"Then?"

"Eh, so... My condition is not good, you can go alone..."

In a split second, Ferris's hand shot out at a speed that could not be seen by the human eye towards her waist and unsheathed her sword . 'SLAP!' with that blunt ringing sound, Ryner collapsed to the ground... Ferris checked Ryner, then sheathed her sword again.

"Eh? What is it, Ryner? Why did you collapse suddenly?"

"It was you who hit my head!"

"Oh, so after having a stomach ache, you had a headache? You're so busy."

Ryner didn't reply, he continued to lie on the ground, grasping his aching head.

"Ow... My head really hurts. I can't stand it, I think I can't go along with you, why don't you..."

Ferris interrupted, "Yes. Your head really hurts, right? Don't worry, next time I guarantee that there wouldn't be any more pain. To be more accurate, I should say that the satisfying feeling of soaring through the air should be what will be waiting for you next time. Yes, only by cutting off the head will the feeling of soaring through the air be most pleasant."

"...You... Aren't you a little too sadistic?"

Ferris nodded her head, "Don't you know that reality is cruel? Now..."

"Ahhhhhhh, wait a moment! Don't say 'reality' while you're reaching for your sword! I understand! Alright, my stomachache is cured and I suddenly have the urge to charge towards that fortress, I see that work is the best..."

Ferris suddenly revealed a warm smile—although her eyes were void of emotion—staring at Ryner,

"Yes, I know you're very dedicated to your job. But there's no need for you to

be so courageous; after all your head still hurts right? Calm down, I'll help you to relieve that pain..."

Ryner walked out of the forest with a troubled expression. Ferris kept her sword once again.

"If you'd just done this in the beginning, it would have been fine."

"I say, can't you be more gentle? Because of the work piled upon me lately, I'm almost collapsing from exhaustion."

"Eh? Then why do I remember you having afternoon naps every day?"

"That's my job... Ah, I was joking, it was a joke, I understand it already, so there's no need to kill me!?"

"Yes, this is quite troublesome. This is also my job; killing Ryner once every day is my target."

"...I envy your ability to be carefree..."

As the two of them talked, they walked towards the fortress that was heavily guarded by the Imperial Nelpha soldiers.

At this moment...

Location: in the distant kingdom from Imperial Nelpha, Roland Kingdom.

The cold morning air allowed people to feel the vitality of the plants, the lifelessness of the rocks. He visited this place that seemed almost as if it were a scene from a dream. He had a strong, noble presence, long silver hair. His golden eyes shone strongly and he had a good appearance.

Sion Astal.

He was the most famous person in the Roland Kingdom...

Although he was a son of a concubine of the previous king, but in the previous war against the Estabul Kingdom, there was a massive promotion in the upper part of the army that was carried out in one fell swoop...

Then blaming the tyrannical predecessor, he was the Hero King who used his graceful hands to raise the revolution. Under the imminent situation of war, he

successfully negotiated with the imperial Nelpha. Furthermore, although he was a nineteen-year-old king, with impressive abilities, charisma, agreeable looks and political means, he was able to gain the overwhelming support from the whole nation.

In the city, those who knew him well spoke of him in this way:

He was a perfect, flawless king. He had no troubles, he would never falter in his decisions, and everything he did would naturally be successful. Roland had always desired this king. He was the ideal king.

In the city, the nobles who hated him would say this:

Does that man truly have no weaknesses? Even if we kill his companions, he would still smile and accept it. He is a heartless and tearless, cold king.

Outside the city, those who did not know him would say this:

That king is truly perfect. He is like a divine existence that exists beyond our grasp. He is not human. He will never be like us who have troubles over boring every day matters. As long as that king exists, this country will continue to prosper and be peaceful.

Because he is the Hero King.

That is not wrong.

“...I’m sorry, I was too late...”

He couldn’t make any mistakes. He couldn’t have any troubles. Those unwavering, determined golden eyes could not turn away from the direction he was heading. Even if it was his trusted aide... Fiole was cruelly murdered by the nobles that opposed the King...

“ ... ”

Furthermore, he could not stop smiling. Because he had a pair of unwavering eyes. He couldn’t let himself feel pain, anger or regret over such petty matters.

But.

Now his eyes...

They were scrunched up with pain.

Looking at the tomb stone...

“... I'm really... sorry, I came too late, Fiole. But after your were killed, I had to call on Nelpha, I was dealing with paperwork and could not free myself from it... If I say this, you'll lecture me on keeping healthy because if I continue working, my health will deteriorate, right?”

Saying this, he smiled weakly.

He was standing in the cemetery.

It was not a graveyard that was meaninglessly decorated by the nobles. This was a normal grave dug by the commoners. Only the noble patriotic soldiers who had died while waging war were buried here.

This was not a place where a King should visit.

A commoners' graveyard...

But this country's King placed his hand on the tomb stone that had the name 'Fiole Folkal' engraved on it and knelt down before it.

“Do you still remember what I told you once? I said... I felt that the people should be equal. I told you that I was going to create a place where there would be no difference in people's status, where everyone would be equal to each other, a country where there would be no war... I actually told you that, I was so arrogant...”

Sion hit the ground angrily.

“Even now, I'm unable to control the nobles of this country! For the sake of escaping from the nobles' attention, I even couldn't come for your memorial and your funeral. I could only sneakily slip out to come visit this place. I killed you... It was because I did not have enough power that I caused you to die... I— Just because I am the king, I can't even stand on the same side as you!” Saying this, he violently punched the ground again.

“Sion, you should get rid of this bad habit. If you continue like this, your hand will be hurt.”

Suddenly, a strong hand grabbed his arm. Sion looked up; standing by his side was a muscular man.

Flaming red hair and a pair of crimson eyes.

The man, who was around twenty years old, was currently the only person in Roland who called Sion by the name.

Major general Claugh Klom.

When Sion was in the army as a Marshal, he was Sion's subordinate. Now, he was in charge of organizing the security for Sion who was the king. Even though he was just a major general, he was also first in Roland in terms of popularity and strength.

Claugh seemed a little unhappy.

"Even though what you said might be right, but what you did just now was wrong. Look at that bleeding fist, Fiole would certainly be angry if he saw that."

Sion looked at his fist and closed his eyes.

"...Probably." As he whispered that, Claugh spoke.

"Ah—ah—ah—this is so troublesome. Look at that, that depressed tone really makes people feel melancholy. At this moment, I'm feeling troubled because I met some difficulties so that's why I'm frowning. After seeing your face, I feel even more low-spirited."

Upon hearing this, Sion furrowed his brow and asked seriously, "Difficulties? What is wrong?"

"Hey, hey, are you worried about me? Do you really want to work yourself to exhaustion? You always work hard for others that you might even die of hard work one day."

Sion shrugged. "Actually I... don't have anything to do right now. Talking about that, this is my first time hearing you say that you actually feel low-spirited. This sounds like a serious problem."

When he heard this, Claugh appeared to be a little displeased, "What do you think I am? I'm a human too, you know. Of course I'll feel depressed at times."

Sion smiled. This smile was different from his smile from just now; it was a slightly more cheerful smile.

“Let’s stop with the jokes. What are you troubled about?”

He stood up from his position in front of Fiole’s grave.

Claugh nodded. “No, that... Actually, I had a dream.”

“A dream?”

“Yes, a dream. It is a very big dream. But it seems that I may be unable to fulfill it.”

“Oh,” Sion nodded. “What kind of dream is it?”

Claugh revealed a strange expression, “My dream is to possess all the women in this world.”

“Huh?” Sion couldn’t help himself and expressed his incredulous response.

“Why are you talking about that with a serious face...”

But Clough interrupted Sion. “Fine, fine, I understand. I know I’m being nonsensical, but what I wanted to say actually wasn’t about this.”

“...Ah?... Oh.”

Even though Sion had not sorted out what had just happened, Clough continued. “An ideal dream is almost impossible to accomplish, so that’s why it’s called the ideal dream, right? Is there anything wrong in saying this?”

When Sion heard this, his expression changed.

“... Yes.”

He already knew what Clough wanted to say...

“Then are you trying to say that you are special? Does it mean that you can create your ideal world easily because you are the king? If it is the famous Hero King, who is different from me, then does it mean that he can easily possess all the women in this world?”

Sion shook his head.

Claugh nodded, satisfied. “Isn’t that so? Accomplishing our dreams is a difficult task. Even the kids know this. Of course Fiole knew this. He is not the kind of person to complain about you not accomplishing your ideal dream when

he himself is in Heaven. Isn't that right?"

"... You're right."

"Then you can relax a little. Right? Fiole," Claugh wasn't facing the grave when he said this, but he said this to the empty air.

"..."

Of course, he received no answer, for Fiole was already dead.

But Claugh turned back to Sion, smiling and said, "There, even Fiole agreed with me."

Sion looked into Claugh's warm eyes and said, "Yes. Thank you, Claugh."

Claugh appeared to be annoyed at that.

"The feeling of a man thanking another man is disgusting."

Sion laughed wryly, then he suddenly revealed a mischievous expression, "That's a really cruel blow! Actually, I have started feeling for you... since a long time ago... I love..."

"Ah, nonsense! Please don't say something so disgusting... Ah, jokes aside..."

"Yeah, it's about time." Saying this, Sion tilted his head back to look at the sky Claugh was looking at just now. Sion spoke, as if he were talking to someone, "... today, I'm going to meet with your younger sister for the first time. To tell the truth, I don't know what side of me I should show when I'm meeting with her..."

"Don't worry, Fiole. Even if your sister hates Sion, I will hug her tenderly..."

"You... Do you know that the other party is only fourteen years old? I wouldn't let you do anything to her! If you dare to do anything to her, I'll kill you!"

"Did you hear that, Fiole? This arrogant king actually said that he wanted to rob me of my freedom to have a relationship..."

At this moment, a strong wind blew a twig into Claugh's face.

"Oh...?!"

Claugh dodged the twig deftly.

Sion was shocked.

“ ...”

The two of them fell silent, staring blankly at...

Sion spoke, his voice carrying a hint of amusement, “See.”

Claugh smiled wryly and shrugged his shoulder. “Yeah, I know. You’re exasperating. I have removed Fiole’s younger sister from my plan to possess all the women in this world. So don’t be angry.”

The two men continued their conversation as they retired from the graveyard.

They headed towards the place where Ferris’s younger sister was waiting for them...

When Sion was still serving the army he came to know of Clough’s subordinate, Calne Kaiwel. Calne had offered some information regarding Fiole’s younger sister—Eslina Folkal.

As Sion strolled on the small path in the courtyard, a beam of light landed on the sheaf of documents in his hands.

Eslina Folkal.

She was fourteen years old this year.

When she was eight, her parents died in the war that was waged during his predecessor’s reign. She and Fiole had been sent to an orphanage to survive on their own. When Fiole started working for Sion, she was able to move out from the orphanage using Fiole’s income. She even started going to school... She had never gone to school before, so her results then had much to be desired from...

But she worked hard so that she would be able to lessen the burden her sibling had. With her hard work and natural talent for academics, her results improved rapidly, so much that she could jump grades.

At least, that was what was written in her file, along with some comments from Calne:

Besides her impressive results, her ability to handle and manage matters were on par with Fiole Folkal...

From the remarks given by people surrounding her, aside from the jealous comments from some people, she was known as 'an admirable girl who looked out for her brother'.

I have a similar impression of her. But I feel that she is stronger than what we first thought of her. When we conveyed news of her deceased sibling's death, she didn't cry. She didn't even appear to be visibly moved, but she calmly accepted everything...

When he read this, Sion stopped looking at the file. Instead, he passed it to Clagh, who was standing by his side and continued to walk on in silence.

When Clagh finished reading the document, he said, "She seems to be a good girl. She really is Fiole's little sister."

Sion nodded.

"Yeah... she's too much of a good person. To say... that she accepted everything calmly..." Sion said, as if he was about to vomit.

Her only brother had been killed, but she still accepted this calmly?

This... was impossible. Something this foolish was impossible... Sion thought.

"She's only fourteen years old?"

She had worked hard for the sake of her brother, so that he would not need to bear the burden of their expenses all by himself, so that he could rest earlier.

Sion felt empathetic because Fiole had the same experience.

For his sister's sake, he had worked hard. He had put an unusual amount of effort into his work.

But, what about myself... What have I done for him?

In city of Roland where Sion himself stayed, there were seven courtyards.

Three courtyards had a pond that was large enough for a boat to sail in. No matter what season it was, there would always be flora blooming in amazing structures. It was unnecessarily large and required expensive maintenance...

At that time, Sion and Fiole had walked in this courtyard.

They were planning that one day, after the nobles of Roland were under their control, they would seal off one of the courtyards. This way, they would be able to save a large amount of money and this money could be diverted to other areas that needed these funds...

At that time, the temperature was warmer, the flora that were blooming then were different than those blooming now. A season was not chilly, full of warm and bright coloured flowers.

Fiole looked at those colourful flowers. "But from my personal perspective, I feel that this courtyard should not be demolished."

Sion heard this, "Eh? But this is the largest courtyard in the city. If we demolish this place, then it would be more effective in reducing the money we have to spend."

"That is true... However, without a courtyard in this city, the city will lose some of its majestic bearing."

"Hey, what you are saying is something a noble would say, Fiole."

"Is it? ... Perhaps. But this courtyard is much prettier than the others... if it's here, Lord Astal, don't you feel that you can put aside your work and allow your mind and body to have some rest? Lord Astal always doesn't pay heed to his health and works too hard! If you don't eat well or sleep well..."

Upon seeing that Fiole was starting to start up his usual lecture, Sion hurriedly said, "Ah, fine, I understand. But I have to admit that this place is very beautiful."

"Yes, it is..."

As he spoke, Fiole's expression softened, "...I'm thinking of showing my sister this place..." He said.

Then Sion... “Eh? Then let her come and have a look.”

“No, it’s not that simple. Lord Astal always works and doesn’t rest, so I can’t rest as well. I don’t have the time to bring my younger sister to this place.” Fiole said.

“Is it my fault?”

But Fiole shook his head, “Ha ha, I was joking. I’m planning to bring her here after some time. I’m also thinking of introducing her to Lord Astal... However, just after a period of time, when this country has truly become Lord Astal’s possession... in that not-too-far-off future... When this country does not have any estrangement, when anyone can live his or her lives happily... Only then, I will probably have some time to bring her here.”

Sion replied, “... Yes. For the sake of that day, we have to work hard.”

“Yes. But I don’t think this future is too far away. Because you have become this country’s king...” Fiole answered, happily looking at the big blooms in the courtyard.

What was he thinking at that time?

Did he think that the day that heralded a blessed future would come?

The future that anyone would be able to live their lives happily?

But...

That future... it never came...

When they reached the courtyard, there were two people waiting for them.

One was a man, Calne Kaiwel.

He had soft, slightly wavy blond hair and lovely blue eyes that gave him a delicate appearance. Like Claugh, he had bet upon his life to work for Sion since the revolutionary period and was now one of Sion’s trusted ministers.

Calne waved when he caught sight of Sion and Claugh, running over to them.

“Really, you’re so slow! We waited for a long time! It must be Claugh-Senpai

who was delaying Lord Sion.”

Claugh retorted, “Ah? Why would you think this way? Maybe it was Sion’s fault.”

Calne shrugged, “That’s impossible!” he said, certain of himself. “Because Lord Sion is not someone who would be late. And senpai, you have no sense of urgency, you always have a slow reaction. It was the same with last time, because you were late for your date, you forced me to apologize to the woman on your behalf, isn’t that so?”

Claugh seemed slightly unhappy, “Ah. You still begrudge me for that even though it happened a long time ago?”

“Ah? A long time ago? Didn’t it just happen a week ago?”

“What? In your eyes, a week is a short period of time?”

“If it’s anyone else, I’m sure they will say that a week is a short period of time!”

Claugh laughed coldly, “Ah, is that so. Well, in this week that is ‘a short period of time towards everyone else’, you already have had an affair with the wives of three different people and broke up with them. So I felt that a week is a long period of time. I see, so it was my mistake.”

“Ah? W-w-why would you know something like that? Ah, Lord Sion, there absolutely nothing like this happening, there is a complex reason for this...”

Sion watched as Calne hurriedly tried to explain himself, wryly smiling as he said, “Calne is amazing. I heard that before we went to Imperial Nelpha to visit, you were having a relationship with Lord Pearl’s wife...”

Claugh said in response, “That was the distant past. Ever since then, the number has risen to twelve women.”

“Ahhhh, why would senpai know that!?”

“T-twelve? I-isn’t that a bit too much? You’ll have to be careful. What would happen if one day someone decides to betray you?”

Claugh laughed, “No, in the end he was dumped by all of them, so it doesn’t matter, right?”

“Wu...” Calne complained, “Wuuu... they all said that they had new lovers, so they didn’t need me anymore... Or it was either that their husbands almost found out about us, so let’s break up... Ahh, why does god have to give me these trials? I haven’t done anything bad...” Sion and Claugh replied together, “Because what you’re doing is adultery.”

“Wu...” Calne moaned.

Claugh continued, “You’re really troublesome. It’s about time you give up on that interest that you have in old women. If you carelessly lay your hands on other people’s woman, the consequences will be dire.”

“I don’t want to be lectured by you. Senpai, didn’t you have an affair with a married woman once?”

“Idi~ot, that was because the woman kept the fact that she was married hidden from me.” As Sion listened to their conversation, he revealed a somewhat agonized expression that carried a trace of an amused smile.

“Anyway, if the two of you could reduce the number of affairs of having, it would be good. Both of you are my important ministers, if you don’t watch out for your behavior, my reputation would be directly affected.”

“You’re saying that? You actually said that? But I’m in the process of having a relationship. Don’t put me on par with my unreliable senpai!”

“Ah? I can’t ignore what you said. Sion, I don’t want you to put me on par with this pervert who only has an interest for relationships with other people’s wives.”

“Pervert? Who is the pervert? Even if it is senpai who said that, it is unforgivable!”

“Ah? You’re the pervert. Who said I was unreliable? Come on then, do you want me to give you a good lesson on how to respect your senpais?”

“You’re so rude! Even if you don’t teach me, I’m still using honorifics for my senpais!”

“Your honorifics don't portray your respect!”

As the two quarreled, they settled into their offensive positions.

When Sion saw this, he couldn't help but laugh. He knew that these two weren't really thinking of fighting. Although normally they did quarrel over such petty matters... but today was different. Today...

The both of them were doing this so that when Sion met Fiole's younger sister, he would not continue to be downhearted. Sion smiled gently when he watched them pretend to fight whilst throwing sneaky glances in his direction.

"Alright, you don't have to worry anymore. But forget it. Let's go."

When Clagh and Calne saw Sion walking out, they were momentarily shocked. Then they hurried to catch up with Sion, whispering, "It's all because of your lousy acting skills that we were discovered!"

"It's senpai's fault! My acting skills were very realistic! I even added in the lines that I felt when confessing to other people's wives!"

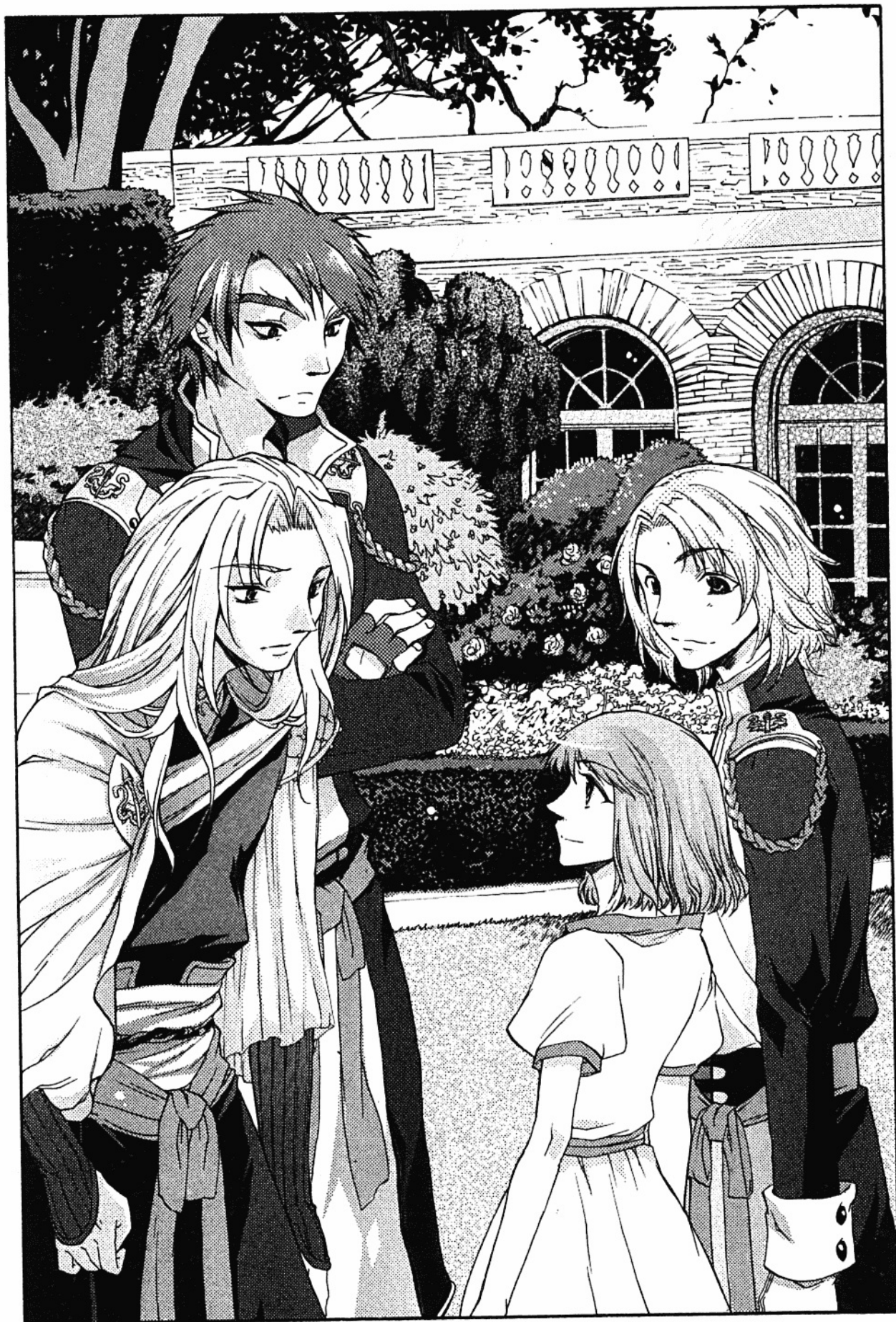
They might have had planned to talk about this quietly... but Sion still heard everything, so their acting skills weren't really that good... Pretending that he had not heard the whispered conversation behind him, Sion headed forward.

A girl was looking in their direction.

She had a vaguely familiar face, beautiful shoulder-length amber hair, a slender body, a body that gave the impression that it was weak but actually it was contrary to that, and clear blue eyes. These eyes squinted when she saw Sion approaching...

When Sion walked in front of her, she bowed her head deeply.

"I am Fiole Folkal's younger sister, Eslina Folkal."



Calne urgently walked to Eslina's side.

"Ah, so it's like that. Lord Sion, this is the girl."

When Claugh heard her self-introduction, he was a little unsatisfied,

"What kind of self-introduction is that?"

"Ah, senpai, don't fuss over this kind of petty stuff!"

Eslina looked at the two of them and smiled. Then she turned her head back to look at Sion.

She wore a pristine white dress. She had no decorations or make-up. Fiole's income was a modest sum of money, but Fiole who was considerate enough to think of his sister sent all the money to Eslina, so she couldn't be poor...

It was just that she was a girl who did not like luxury. From this point, Sion could understand her attitude. This young girl couldn't be lacking interest in make-up or clothes... It was just that she did wanted to lessen the burden on her brother's shoulders, so she worked hard every day.

She did not care about anything else...

All for her brother...

This gesture made her seem even more glorious...

It was a huge contrast against the noble women surrounding Sion; they only knew how to use money to disguise their worthlessness.

But the young girl almost seemed as if she did not require any decoration, like Fiole, that appearance would unquestionably be beautiful in the future.

But Sion frowned.

He thought... that she still needed Fiole's protection...

The one who killed him...

Was himself who was powerless...

Sion opened his mouth slowly...

"...Your brother always took care of me..."

In that moment, her expression changed. Smiling brightly, “I’m humbled by that. I’m sure Onii-san will cry into tears of happiness if he knew that His Majesty praised him so.” She said with a smile.

She seemed really happy. Her brother was dead, but she was happy...

It’s my fault, for causing her brother to die...

But Eslina kept looking at Sion. “Please don’t reveal that kind of expression. Onii-san... will be sad.”

“Ah...?”

Sion was surprised by this sudden sentence. It was as if she could look into Sion’s heart with that pair of pure eyes.

“...Onii-san was always happy that he was able to serve His Majesty and meet His Majesty. Onii-san wrote me several letters, telling me that he was happy. Even if it was only a letter, I felt happy too. So, please don’t reveal that kind of expression. I will feel sad too. I think Onii-san died, satisfied with his life. He was able to see His Majesty’s dreams, so he was able to die peacefully... So I also want to serve His Majesty. I want to help out with the dream that Onii-san saw.” She said.

He had died peacefully, satisfied, so it was not saddening for her.

She said this.

She said this wearing a smile.

But he knew that she was lying.

She could not possibly not be sad...

Sion closed his eyes... “Calne. Did you tell her the reason for Fiole’s death?”

“...Ah? ...Oh, that...”

Looking at Calne’s stuttering expression, he shouted.

“Calne!”

“Yes!? Ah, that... I said it was an unfortunate accident...”

“...Is that so...”

Sion replied softly, then he breathed deeply.

“Fiole’s death was not purely by accident.”

In that split second, Eslina noticeably tensed.

Calne tried to interrupt,

“No, that, Lord Sion!?”

But Sion ignored him and continued. “Fiole... was killed by the nobles as a warning for me... that I did not have enough power, so I was unable to control the nobles, so Fiole was killed. Even so, do you still want to continue working for me?”

“...” Eslina did not reply.

Sion removed a letter from his possession and passed it to Eslina.

It was a letter that Fiole had written for his younger sister before he had died...

It was a letter that was covered with Fiole’s blood.

The letter was written like this.

Eslina, thank you for writing to me every time. I’m sorry I can’t reply to your letters all the time.

But, Eslina you are healthy, so Onii-san is relieved.

Your academic results seem to be very good, you are very hard working. I feel very encouraged when I read the letters you’ve written to me.

I am very lucky to have an excellent superior. Lord Astal... His Majesty is a great person. He treats commoners like us equally. The most important thing is that he really means well for this country. It is good that this lordly person is our country’s monarch.

As a citizen who is able to live in the country this lord is ruling, I feel very proud. If it is possible, I would like to let Eslinda see Lord Astal...

Ah, that’s right. Lord Astal says he is giving me a break for the weekends so that I can return to see you.

See? Isn't he a kind person?

So I will be visiting you during the weekends. It's been a long time since I last saw you. In the past, whenever I returned home, Mother would make her best cheese. Eslinda, like Mother, has a talent in culinary, so you'll definitely make a good bride.

If the groom were to be Lord Astal...

Ah, this is not the kind of things that a lowly-commoner like me should say~

Well, that's all for now. I hope to see you during the weekends.

Fiole Folkal

“...Ah...Wu...”

The weekend that would never arrive.

The time that they would never spend together.

Eslina’s hand trembled continuously as she held the blood-splattered letter.

“...Wu...”

Tears rolled out from those strong-willed eyes.

Fiole had looked forward to seeing his little sister.

Fiole had looked forward to seeing the changing country.

Fiole had looked forward to seeing his younger sister’s happiness at living in this country.

But the letter that carried that small piece of happiness and hope was stained with blood.

He was cruelly murdered, Fiole’s blood.

“Ah...Wu...”

Eslina tried to control her sobs, but she couldn’t stop her tears. She hugged the letter to her chest, gritting her teeth but still failed in stopping her tears.

Sion looked at her, “I was unable to protect Fiole... No, he was murdered and that was my fault. It was not because of any accident. Even so, are you still able to work for me?”

“...”

She took a deep breath to calm herself down. Holding the letter to her chest, she used her other hand to wipe her tears away.

After that, she said, “...I...like Onii-san very much. When our parents died, they left the two of us two survive alone, depending on each other. I was eight when our parents died... But brother, even though he was eleven, has always protected me... He has always, always protected me... Brother and I are quite

different from one another. He is good at everything he does, but I can't even do anything to help him out... But I will work hard so that one day I will be able to help him... but... I never thought... that he would pass...pass away so early..."

She whimpered slightly and her tears threatened to flow again. But she shut her eyes and suppressed those tears, taking a deep breath, "But I... still think that Onii-san was happy. He was able to meet His Majesty. He was always talking about His Majesty. So I wish to help His Majesty, who has made Onii-san happy. Because I don't want to make Onii-san angry..."

She smiled slightly while saying this. "I think Onii-san would affirm that me working for His Majesty is not wrong! I want to inherit Onii-san's position. So please allow me to stay by His Majesty's side..."

But Sion did not reply.

Was this really happening? Did Fiole really wish for Eslina to stay by my side? Wouldn't the nobles reach out for Eslina? At that time, will I be able to protect her?

At this moment, Calne spoke,

"Her... About Eslina's abilities, even though she is starting now, but she is on par with Fiole's standards. I have already seen her a few times, so I guarantee that she is an outstanding child. Isn't this... acceptable?"

No, it was not like that. Sion thought. The problem was not about her abilities.

Compared to that, he was frightened that what had happened to Fiole would happen to her...

Then, Claugh said, "Nothing like that will ever happen again."

"..."

"Is it like that, then? She can stay at my place, I'll take care of her." The moment Claugh said this, Calne hurriedly said, "Wait, wait a moment! Lord Sion, please dissuade him! Senpai has no age preferences for his women, he is those kind who will do anything to them!"

"What do you mean?!"

"It's like what I said!"

“What! Ahh, but I’m not like you who targets the older audience!”

“What!? You dare to say that in Eslina’s presence! Wouldn’t you make her doubt my character!”

Watching the two of them squabble, Eslina said, “Re...really... Ha ha ha, are the two of them always like that?”

She laughed freely, without a trace of distress in her smile.

“I finally understand why Brother liked this place...”

Saying this, she looked at her surroundings. Sion turned his gaze to their surroundings too. He had not accompanied Fiole to come admire these colourful flowers, but this place was still filled with many blooming flowers, they were certainly beautiful.

As if she could look into Sion’s heart, she smiled.

“What Onii-san liked was not these flowers. The gentle... too gentle king that cared about people like us, cheerful companions...so please let me work here. No, even if you disagree, I will work hard so that I will be able to work here. Don’t look at my outward appearance. To tell the truth, I’m very hardworking.”

Sion smiled wryly when he heard that, “Yes... The fact that Calne has affairs with other people’s wives has to be remedied. If a cute girl like Eslina is by his side, he’ll probably understand what is so attracting about these younger girls...”

“Ah!? Even Lord Sion agrees with Claugh!? Why did it end up like this!”

Eslina laughed again. “Ah, that means... I can stay here? That’s great!”

Sion lowered his eyes.

She should be a strong child.

Her vengefulness towards the nobles who killed Fiole...

Her hate and suspicions towards Sion who had easily allowed the nobles to kill Fiole... all of them were suppressed...

Strong, vigorously living...

I can’t do that... He thought.

I'm unable to smile like her.

His mother's face rose in his mind's eye. His mother's appearance as she died, belittled and treated like an inconsequential ant. When his mother died, could he have shown an expression like Eslina's...?

He thought about this...

At this moment, a voice spoke from behind them.

It was a cold voice, almost lifeless, a devil's voice...

"Your Majesty, you've over stepped your boundaries. Eslina Folkal. Someone like you can't stay by His Majesty's side." The voice said.

Sion turned around. A man had been standing behind them, unnoticed by everyone.

He had a pretty face, dark hair and was about the same height as Claugh. He was the opposite of Claugh though, he was very slim. Moreover, even though he was a stunning beauty, this was not the feature that attracted people's eyes.

It was his cold green eyes that were the most splendid feature...

Those pair of sharp, icy eyes that seemed as if they overlooked everything, emanating a dark atmosphere...

Miran Froaude.

He said that Sion's over-bearing attitude would be needed... Not only in the Roland Kingdom, but as the King of Roland Kingdom who would rule the whole of the Menoris Continent, so he had been taken in by Sion as a talented advisor.

He said that all the darkness, dirty matters that would be committed on this cruel path to forceful ruling would be carried by him...

His powers were above the average. He handled matters of helping Sion, handling Fiole's workload, or the dirty matters that were not entrusted to Fiole and completed them so perfectly that it made one annoyed...

Good or bad, he would always pick the most effective method.

This was the path he chose.

And because of this, Froaude's relationship with Claugh and Calne were not good...

Now, Claugh was glaring at him, "Where did you appear from?"

Froaude turned his icy eyes to Claugh, "... You ask where... I came here by walking normally on that path."

"I didn't mean that! Where did you appear, who allowed you to eavesdrop on our conversation? You even masked your presence so that you could get near us."

Yes.

Froaude's presence was completely masked. So much so that even Sion and Claugh— who was more sensitive than Sion— could not detect it.

But Froaude shrugged, "Don't be so harsh, Major General Klom. I didn't even think of masking my presence... I just feel that this girl seemed rather familiar, so I walked over. This girl is the deceased Fiole Folkal's younger sister, Miss Eslina Folkal, am I right?"

Claugh replied, "So what about that?"

But Froaude unexpectedly raised up his hand that was adorned with a black ring.

That hand was raised in Eslina's direction...

Narrowing his eyes, he said, "Then... I'm going to kill her now."

"What!?"

"You..."

In a split second, Calne and Claugh settled into their battle positions.

The mood in the courtyard changed in a moment and became tense...

But Froaude tilted his head, "Ah, why are the two of you emanating an killing intent? Major General Klom, have I said anything strange?"

"You've always spoken strange things, you gloomy bastard. I wouldn't let you kill Eslina."

But Froaude looked at Claugh for a little longer... then he smiled, "You're saying you're supposed to protect Eslina Folkal?"

"Of course."

"That's odd, wasn't your duty to protect Lord Astal? Then why do you protect Eslina? What about you, Calne? Don't tell me you think that you plan to raise the person who may one day decide to kill His Majesty because of revenge, Eslina Folkal?"

At that moment, Eslina said, "How can that be... I..."

Calne interrupted her, "Eslina wouldn't do something like that!" he shouted at Froaude.

But Froaude only aimed those cold eyes at Eslina... "Is that so?"

Eslina trembled. Looking at those bottomless eyes... Just by doing so, Eslina had reached her limit.

"I, I... wouldn't do anything that would make Onii-san sad."

Froaude's mouth lifted into a very slight smile, "Is that so. If you have no misconceptions, I'll even help you with your revenge. Killing the ignorant nobles of this country is a very important job. If you really wish to avenge your brother, you're welcome to find me. You're still young and beautiful. If you would use that body, you can easily become the fall of the nobles..."

Claugh interrupted, "If you continue speaking about this, I'll kill you."

Calne added, "Eslina wouldn't do something like that!"

Hearing this, Froaude said, "Really? Then I have to report that Miss Folkal loves her esteemed brother..."

At this moment, Sion opened his mouth. "That's enough, Froaude."

His voice was not very loud, but he used an oppressive tone. "I wouldn't let Eslina do those kind of things. I would not forgive anyone who forced her into doing them. And..."

Sion looked at Eslina with empty eyes, "Fiole would never allow it. Don't be sad and troubled, Eslina."

When Eslina heard this, she breathed a sigh of relief. Seeing this, Sion nodded voicelessly. Then he turned back to Froaude and glared at him fiercely.

Seeing this, Froaude said, "This is... Have I made you unhappy?"

"Yes." Sion nodded his head.

Hearing this, Froaude replied, "I apologize." And bowed his head, a slight smile appearing on his face.

"Oh yes, about that case I raised last time..."

As if nothing had happened, he immediately raised another issue.

Sion frowned.

Froaude had been raising this issue lately. It was regarding... invading Imperial Nelpha, the neighboring country.

That was, to launch an invasion.

Sion shook his head.

"Didn't I veto this issue already? I don't have any intentions to start a war with Nelpha as of now."

Claugh, Calne and Eslina couldn't help but gasp in surprise...

Claugh said, "What!? Sion, what is this about? Don't tell me Froaude suggested to start a war with Nelpha?"

Calne added, "You're joking, right? We just ended the war with Nelpha... A, A while before, didn't we pay a visit to Nelpha and agree to establish a good friendship with them?"

Eslina seemed to be speechless.

The peace that they had finally attained.

Everyone here... No, in all of the Roland Kingdom that had experienced a long term war, there was no one who didn't know the fear war brought.

Everyone had experienced the grief that the unneeded war brought...

But Froaude said, "It isn't a strange matter. It is exactly because we have managed to establish these good relations with Nelpha that gives us the best

opportunities to carry out an invasion. Nelpha would not think that Roland would attack them now. So if we attack now, the battle will undoubtedly be in our favour.”

This time, Claugh glared at Froaude with hatred in his eyes, “You bastard... do you still want to... bleed more...”

But Froaude ignored Claugh’s glare and continued calmly. “Major General Klom, do you know the country Stohl?”

“Ah? Of course I know of it. It’s in the north of the Menoris Continent, it’s the biggest land country.”

Froaude nodded his head. “That country and our country are in the north and south respectively, so they are unable to reach here... But their territory is five times larger than ours. Even their national power, military power... Our country is unable to compare with it. There are other countries that are even bigger than Roland. Ah, yes, then do you know of a country called Gastark?”

“No, I don’t. What are you trying to say?”

“Gastark was originally a small, aspiring country. Lord Klom, lately it has been expanding its power at a rapid rate and it has already conquered two countries... Now, it’s waging war with Stohl... I’m afraid what Lord Froaude means to say is... after today, maybe the Menoris Continent will be welcoming a period of war that has never been seen before...” Eslina said this calmly. Claugh and Calne looked at Eslinda with surprised expression...

Froaude nodded his head. “My lady is quite clever. One day, the enemy country will attack Roland. And this will be a country that is much more powerful than Estabul... If we think about it, wouldn’t our country have to work harder now in order to prepare for then?”

Claugh said, “So what you mean is that we invade Nelpha based on these reasons?”

Calne followed, “But must we invade Nelpha? The other country, Runa, is also our ally. If Nelpha, Runa and Roland combine their powers, even if it’s a large kingdom attacking...”

But Froaude shook his head. “That’s impossible. Regardless of whether it is

Stohl or Gastark, both of them are completely military based countries. They wouldn't use such a simple alliance to attack us. Moreover, you think of those naïve and weak nobles in Nelpha as your comrades? Can they fight? They are like those nobles who are not conscious to crisis and plotted to assassinate this country's king..."

At this, Claugh and Calne were unable to retort. What Froaude had said was true. Even if they combined forces with the nobles of Nelpha, they would be unable to defend against a strong invading country.

But...

Sion spoke.

"Even if it's like that, this still can't be done. Froaude, you should know this, as well."

"But there's no more time."

"Who will have the power to invade Nelpha? On the surface, Roland kingdom has become a big country after joining up with Estabul. But in reality, this is a weak country that cannot even control Estabul. Can a country that has internal problems attack other countries?"

Claugh and Calne made noises of agreement.

Froaude acknowledged, "So it's like that. As expected of Lord Astal. You really understand the situation this country is in. So that means that I have to raise the issue we discussed a while ago."

Hearing this... Sion's face contorted and muttered, "Darn. I see. Your intention was this..."

"Yes. My intention was to talk about that. If possible, I'd like everyone to leave before we continue..."

Sion said, "... I'm sorry, could all of you please leave?"

"Wait, Sion! Why don't you explain to me..."

But he interrupted Claugh, "Claugh!" Sion raised his voice.

Claugh could only stop... He glared at Froaude for a moment and held his

tongue.

“... Che. Fine, I understand. Your secret meetings again. But you’ll have to explain everything to us later!”

Sion smiled, “Yes, I was thinking of that.”

“Then we’ll return to the city. Eslina will stay at Calne’s place for the moment, is that fine?”

“Yes.”

“Let’s go, Calne, Eslina.”

Saying that, Clough walked out with an unhappy expression. Seeing this, Calne said, “Ah, w-wait up! Lord Sion, we’ll retire now.”

Eslina looked at Sion worriedly. Sion waved a hand to tell her that she did not need to worry. She bowed her head and chased after Calne.

After that...

Sion watched them leaving until he could no longer see them...

“So what now?”

He looked at Froaude with an exhausted expression.

Froaude smiled coldly.

Continuing with their conversation. “Like what I just told Lord Astal, our country is in an unfavourable position. We are not in a position to attack Nelpha. We must quickly secure the Estabul kingdom under our rule.”

“Yes, that’s right. What about the movements of the Estabul royalists?”

“There have been no problems with them. According to Lord Astal’s orders, the king of Estabul and the nobles who had power have been given special status and appropriate noble names by Roland. Then they were given guarantees on their lives. They quickly succumbed to us. Because they don’t need to fight in the war, they can be a foolish noble in Roland, so there is no problem.”

“Then?”

“The problem lies with the nobles who think for their country. These nobles think that the Estabul kingdom still should be under the ruling of the royals and has become part of Roland without any war. The accumulated hatred at being suppressed by those failing nobles is almost bursting out from them... These people are trusted by the people of Estabul. Even if we dismiss their army, they will have a certain degree of power.”

Sion clasped his elbow, “Ideal revolutionists...is it. Nobles who think well of the country. I hope that such powerful people will become our companions...”

But Froaude stared at him, “But like what I said. We don’t have any time. So I raised the issue of killing the nobles of Estabul...”

Sion’s face darkened. “This... can’t be carried out.”

Froaude revealed a demonic smile, “That’s right. His Majesty has a kind heart and is a generous king. Even if Estabul’s nobles cause any trouble, we can’t kill them mercilessly... But what if those nobles who think for the benefit of Estabul gather together to plot a revolution? At this moment, even if His Majesty kills them all, there won’t be any unhappiness from anyone.”

“...”

“It’s simple. As long as we get someone who has a relation to Roland to be the conspirator and allow him to stir up the revolutions. Only this way will those naïve Estabul nobles gather together... Then the news will be leaked and we can easily exterminate the revolutionary power in Estabul.”

It was an unbelievable plan.

Tricking those people who only wished for the best of their country, giving them hope and finally accusing them of treason and killing them. Froaude’s plan would indeed be effective. If they used this plan, all of those dangerous people would be killed. If those who had no intention to rebel heard of this failed revolution, they would start to move to prove their loyalty. If it were like that, they would be able to wipe out all signs of resistance...

But even if they did this...

Sion turned exasperated, “... Even if we did this... These immoral methods would conform all of Estabul...”

Froaude interrupted Sion, “That is to be expected, Your Majesty. Your Majesty can’t have come up with this kind of merciless act. I was only telling you that this kind of situation could happen...”

Just as he said that, a man ran to Sion quickly. Upon seeing Sion, he said, “Your Majesty, there’s trouble! The nobles of Estabul have gathered together and they are r-rebelling!”

Sion immediately looked at Froaude.

Froaude assumed a nonchalant expression. “That’s coincidental. If it’s like that, then the time you have to make a decision draws near. Would you resolve this in a fair and square manner or would you become a real king... no matter what your choice is, I will always be loyal to you...”

“... Who is the main conspirator?”

Froaude smiled slightly, “Coincidentally, it’s someone I know...”

“ ...”

Darn...

Sion’s heart groaned.

If the nobles of Estabul were to die now, then it would be beneficial for them. For Roland’s citizens, no, for Estabul’s people as well, they had to start the invasion of other countries as soon as possible...

Even if it is like this, I still...

I...

“ ...”

Sion raised his head, carrying a determined expression, he commanded Froaude.

After which, Froaude said, “As you wish, Your Majesty...” smiling as he bowed.

Chapter 2: A meeting with a girl

The morning breeze.

A somewhat lethargic atmosphere after breakfast.

Even so, the equipped Nelpha soldiers guarded the fortress tightly.

The guards standing at the entrances to the fortress made one feel as if even a mouse was unable to slip in. There were no holes in the fortress that provided an alternate entrance. The windows had been barred so they were inaccessible.

The security was a little strange.

This kind of fortress... But...

Ryner and Ferris had somehow managed to slip in...

Their invasion tactic was very simple. They walked to the main entrance boldly and Ferris knocked out the eight soldiers with an astounding efficiency without rousing the alarm...

Like that...

“Please have a little common sense. We should plan on how to invade this place first, then find a back door where no one will notice and then slip in, that should be the proper etiquette.”

An invasion could not be counted as etiquette, though...

Just as a side note, they were already in the fortress and walking down to the stairs to the underground room where the treasure might be hidden.

Ferris started to turn to reply to Ryner when suddenly, from ahead,

“Who, who are you...”

An unlucky soldier shouted from where he was on the stairs.

In a moment!

“Au—”

In a split second, Ferris had leapt forward, swiftly executing a karate chop on the soldier's neck. The soldier collapsed soundlessly.

Ferris seemed to release a breath of relief and ignored the soldier,

“Yes, like what we planned, no one has discovered us.”

“...So the word ‘plan’ can be used under these circumstances... If it's about violence, I can understand if the word ‘force’... No, forget it, it's fine if you're happy...”

Ryner avoided the unconscious soldier and continued down the steps.

In the end, both of them did not appear to be nervous at all.

As they walked down the stairs, Ferris asked,

“Talking about that, you haven't mentioned... What Heroes' Relic could be protected in this fortress?”

“Eh? Yeah, that, it should be something... like a sword.”

“Sword?”

Ryner nodded his head and folded his arms as he recalled the information.

“That should be the legend.”

As he talked, he looked up,

“From a distant land.

It spreads life, birth and death.

Flaming fires

Night made day by the flames

Distant, twilight, jealousy, nightmare.

It will bury this world and hell in shadows at midnight..."

Until here,

"Talk in layman's terms."

Ryner appeared to be helpless,

"There isn't any other way to explain this. That was the introduction to the legend, the story has just began... What follows will be more interesting."

But Ferris's beautiful face remained bland,

"Oh, is that so. I have no interest. Talk about the ending."

"Ah? ... Ah, that... no interest... You're so straightforward... Forget it..."

Ryner was slightly disappointed, but he reluctantly continued.

"Anyway, about what I was talking about, the beginning part was introducing the Demon King of the world then."

"Demon King?"

"Yes, this case is different from the legend of the Dark Emperor who was a tyrannical king of his empire. This was a real Demon King. See you can tell from the line 'From a distant land'. It's a story about him appearing suddenly and plunging the world into an era of fear. Sounds amazing, doesn't it?"

But Ferris,

"Wu~"

She only let out a disinterested sound...

Ryner sighed when he saw this...

"You... actually said 'wu'... Don't you mind a monster engulfing the world?"

But towards this,

"No. After all, it's just a legend."

“I say... It’s because of these legends that we are sent to travel the world.”

Ferris shrugged,

“My only interest is to defeat these Heroes’ Relics that were used by the monstrous Heroes.”

“...How unromantic...”

Ryner continued with a disappointed tone,

“But let’s leave that aside... The main point was that. Anyway, a Hero’s sword might have been left in this fortress. Simply said, a powerful Demon King appeared then and a knight called Claus Gabardi... defeated him and was named the knight in the legend of the Heroes. After that knight died, the sword that he had used to defeat the Demon King was left in the ground somewhere near here...”

“Wu.”

“But there’s been some discussion that this sword cannot be retrieved by anyone...”

Ferris tilted her head,

“Cannot be retrieved? Will the sword that cannot be retrieved still be in this fortress?”

Ryner nodded his head hard,

“That’s it. The sword in this legend... cannot be removed from the ground no matter how much strength is used and it is obviously something good. So according to common sense, this will become a famous tourist site, right?”

Ferris nodded,

“But I haven’t heard any rumors of this sort.”

“So I was thinking of this, in order to hide the fact that the sword that cannot be removed from the ground in here, they constructed a fortress here and named it the important historical site of the Imperia Nelpha...”

Ferris folded her arms,

“Yes, that idea’s not bad. This means that this area that has a heavily

protected historical fortress...”

“That’s it. So...”

Ryner looked rather nervous and narrowed his eyes. They had reached the end of the stairs and were in a large underground room... or rather, a hall.

There were some lamps lighting up the dark hall, but these lamps were not bright enough to light the big hall.

Ryner looked at the dark hall,

“If there were really a Heroes’ Relic here, that’d be good~”

“If there are none, your brain...”

“Alright, don’t talk about that now... What’s that?”

He scratched his chin and pointed into the dark depths of the hall.

Ferris revealed a mystified expression,

“Wu, there are eight presences. It seems to be the guards protecting this big hall.”

“Right. Our opponents haven’t noticed us... What do you think we should...”

But Ryner had not finished speaking when Ferris disappeared. There were eight groans...

From the darkness,

“I’m done. Let’s investigate quickly.”

“...”

Ryner scratched his head and weakly said,

“Forget it. But I feel that I’m not enjoying this at all~”

Saying this, he walked into the hall...

Ryner observed his surroundings.

The first impression that this hall gave people was ‘Treasure!’ because of the seemingly old boxes.

It was a marvelous place. But compared to these ancient boxes, the room

seemed to be kept clean, at least a single speck of dust couldn't be seen in this darkness.

Ryner looked and said,

"Alright, which box should we start from?"

"Eh? Why not we open everything."

But Ryner shook his head.

"Too~naïve. With these many boxes that appear to hold treasure, there is only one genuine article, the rest are ambushes!"

"I see, is that so?"

"It's like that. In majority of the stories, they would do this so as to prevent the other party from being victorious."

"Mm-hmm. So which box is the real one?"

Asking this...

"Eh? ... Ah, that..."

Ryner started to inspect the boxes.

"..."

They had already reached this stage. If he failed now, then it would mean that he was still a novice. Ryner carefully checked the boxes again and again. He used skilled methods to check if there were any traps, were there any markings and what was the structure...

"..."

Finally, he had checked all of the boxes...

Ryner lifted his head with a determined expression,

"Fine! It seems as if I still don't understand, so let's open... all the boxes... this way..."

As he said this, he peeked at Ferris's expression, Ferris replied,

"Yes, let's open all of them."

“I say, you should have at least made a quip...”

As Ryner said with a upset face, Ferris opened the first box...

He looked at her for a moment.

Ryner and Ferris looked into the treasure chest at the same time...

It was filled with documents.

It was obvious that it wasn't a sword or old documents, but new documents...

That meant that this was certainly not any Heroes' Relic...

That meant that this chest could be disposed of...

But that didn't happen...

Ferris used her emotionless voice to say,

“... Oh, that ambush was amazing. Even I felt as if I could have lost my life, Ryner.”

“Wuuu... Don't bully me...”

Don't mind the nonsensical conversation.

The two continued to open the chests.

But,

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

All of the chests were filled with documents...

Ferris pulled out a piece of paper from the documents and narrowed her eyes. Then she passed it to Ryner.

“How are you going to convince me?”

“Ah? Convince you?”

Ryner received the paper and read it.

The paper recorded that the governor of this district had made numerous improper acts regarding the tax payment to the king. Ryner was stunned...

“...Ah, then this fortress... was to hide this...?”

“It seems so.”

Ferris nodded, Ryner started to tremble.

“Then, then, the relic?”

“I don’t know.”

“Then what will happen to me who woke up early and worked so hard?”

“I don’t know. But I can confirm one thing.”

“Ah?”

When Ryner raised his head, Ferris had already unsheathed her sword.

“Before you convince me why we have to spend so much effort, I will cut down your head first...”

“Aaaaaaah!! Wait, wait a moment! Don’t get impatient! Uh, how should I say this, even the perfect me can make one or two mistakes... and, and I have leads on other Heroes’ Relics...”

Ferris narrowed her eyes at this, planning to swing her sword,

“I don’t want to hear your excuses...”

“They’re not excuses! So I told you not to be impatient! About that, actually the position of this fortress and the map on the records are slightly different... The real relic should be somewhere in the forest.”

“Oh, what about it?”

Ryner continued to retreat and said,

“Then... that... the place where we camped at, yesterday? In the forest.”

“Mm-hmm.”

He retreated a step as he said,

“Actually it’s somewhere near there... From the map of the records... the sword should be nearby there...”

“Oh... why didn’t you tell me this...?”

At this point, Ryner had already escaped Ferris by taking small steps away from her,

“No, that, because we didn’t see the sword, so I thought it could have been removed by someone, or it would just a rumour... or it might be that, since it has been a long time, it was buried underground... If, if that’s the case, you would force me to dig, right? I don’t want to do something so troublesome. Anyway, isn’t the probability of the relic being in the fortress higher than it being buried under soil that has accumulated for hundreds and thousands of years... Don’t you agree... And that... So that... I, I’m sorry... Don’t kill me?”

Ryner explained and ended with an apology...

But Ferris raised her sword...

She pointed the sword in a different direction from Ryner,

“Who is that who has been watching us from since just now?”

Ferris said in a loud voice that could be heard in the hall and was louder than her usual volume. Ryner turned in the direction of where Ferris was looking in, “Yes, yes, we wouldn’t attack you suddenly, what are you doing there?”

He looked in the same corner of the room where Ferris was looking in and said.

Although it was very dark and the lamps were not shining on them so there weren’t any shadows or silhouettes... But from earlier, there were two presences that could be felt from there.

They were different from the Imperial Nelpha soldiers, they didn’t call for their companions and they didn’t release any killing intentions to Ryner and Ferris. It seemed as if they had some motive and had silently watched the situation...

A girl’s forceful and slightly high-pitched voice spoke,

"Ah, geez! It's because Sui-niichan was making so much noise that they noticed us!"

Following from that was a timid, gentle voice,

"Eh? It's my fault?"

“Of course! It’s all because Sui-niichan always fails, so I always don’t want to help you! You idiot! Slow! Silly!”

“Yeah, I know that, I know that. Sorry, Kuu, but what should we do under this kind of circumstances?”

“Of course I understand! We should flee now!! The entrances of the fortress are not guarded by the Imperial Nelpha soldiers, we thought it would be a good opportunity to steal the treasure... but we were caught by that monster that cut down all the soldiers! What should we do!”

“No, that, Kuu... you don’t have to explain that, I understand that this is not the time to be fleeing.”

“Aaaaaaaahh really! Sui-niichan is really an idiot! Didn’t I tell Sui-niichan! We have to let that strong woman hear what we are saying. We have to show that we have no wish to snatch the treasure from you, if that succeeds, then we can escape? Do you two understand!? That’s what I’m saying, so you can’t chase us!”

Even so, the tone of this voice could be too forceful or pleading...

Ryner listened to their conversation then asked Ferris,

“What should we do, Ferris?”

Ferris replied,

“Yes. Hmm, anyway, we didn’t find what we looking for here. But don’t the two of you hold some interest in these chests?”

Hearing this, the two people who were hidden in the dark... or rather, the younger sister called Kuu appeared to panic, the change in mood could be sensed by Ryner and Ferris.

“No, no, no! We can’t be tricked, Sui-niichan!? This is a trap! With the darling in front of them, it’s impossible that no one would be interested!”

Sui used a calm voice,

“No, I have no interest in the darling.”

“Eh!? Then why did you want to invade this place!”

“Right, I said this before, this place has been guarded by Nelpha tightly for the past few years, so there must be something important hidden in here, right? Mysterious themes are quite rare. As an author, of course I would be interested.”

“Are you serious!? If anyone can survive just by writing mysteries, then no one would need to work! Ahh, really, this is why I hate authors... you’re already twenty six years old but you completely lack the ability to survive... you even need a fourteen year old child to work to support you, don’t you feel embarrassed!?”

“Wu... I... do feel embarrassed.”

“And and, yes... If I continue to look after Sui-niichan for the next few years, I will grow old without even having a relationship or marrying... That will definitely happen... Ah, I’m so pitiful... What do you think? I said, what do you think?”

“Ah? You’re asking me what I think...?”

“I’m referring to the fourteen year old girl who has not even had a romantic relationship but has grown old and weak. As my brother, won’t you think of rescuing me!?”

“Old and weak... I would say that’s not good, I’ll be disturbed. I wish that Kuu will be able to live happily.”

“That what are you doing now!”

“Ah?... Yes, getting the treasure... right?”

“That’s it! Alright, let’s go! The preparations for escaping are done! Right! I’m going! Aiaiaiaiaia!”

Saying this, a girl energetically rushed forward to Ryner and Ferris.

She was an adorable girl. Although she was fourteen years old already, but she was quite short and appeared to be small.

She had a reddish... or better, a certain rare pink hair colour. She was dressed in black and was very petite. She had an appealing face and beautiful eyes. In contrast to the tough tone, she was a delicate and charming girl.

This girl slapped her palms together with a 'pa!' and bowed to Ryner and Ferris,

"Because of that, in order to rescue this pitiful fourteen year old girl, could you share some of the treasure with us? Ah, really, Sui-niichan, come help me!"

As she said this, Kuu pulled a tall man out from the dark corner.

He was slightly taller than Ryner but he had no powerful presence. He seemed to be a weak man who was only able to laugh foolishly in this situation. Because they were siblings, he had the same hair colour as Kuu. His long hair had a comb stuck in it.

He looked like Kuu...

Only, the colour of his eyes could not be determined because his eyes were squinted as he was smiling.

That man also bowed to Ryner and Ferris,

"That... because of that, for Kuu's dowry, please give a treasure chest to us."

That's what he said.

Ryner looked at the other party that did ignored them and who forced their opinions on them,

"Ah~ But, you heard what we were talking about just now, right?"

Kuu tilted her head,

"Ah? What are you referring to...?"

"That, I mean the chests here are not treasure chests... Ahh, forget it, anyway, it's all yours."

Before he finished speaking, Kuu and Sui were already quickly opening the chests.

Several minutes later,

"I say, what is this! There's no treasure at all!!"

Sui added,

"Compared to that, Kuu, look at this. This is amazing, this place has all the

things that the governor has tried to hide. So it's like that. The corrupted tax officers... Then the village boy who tried to rebel against them with a girl who was in love with him... Ahh, my mind is filled with a torrent of ideas of what will be a good novel..."

Kuu replied harshly,

"How can such a stupid story sell out!"

In that moment,

"..."

Sui's face was filled with a sadness, as if his soul had been sucked away, it was particularly amusing,

"Wuuu... Kuu-chan... Do you know the sentence that one cannot grow if they are not praised?"

Kuu ignored him and turned to Ryner and Ferris,

"What is this? Where is the treasure?"

Ryner sighed and replied,

"There is none."

"Have you taken all of them?"

Ryner shook his head,

"No, from the beginning, it was like that."

"Then, why did you come here?"

"Wu? That is because we are finding the Heroes'..."

Suddenly there was a killing intent and a strong force moved towards Ryner's head...

"Ah? I meant-wait..."

PA! Ryner collapsed to the ground.

Ferris checked the collapsed Ryner and sheathed her sword,

"We are government officers under secret orders from the king of Imperial

Nelpha.”

What she said...

Ryner held his aching head,

“Why, why did you hit me suddenly...Wa!?”

Ferris stepped on his back immediately, preventing from speaking...

Then she said in a small voice,

“The fact that we are hunting for the Heroes’ Relics is a secret to other countries, I’m sure you’re aware of this? What were you planning to say?”

“You don’t need to hit... Yaaaaah!?”

Just as Ryner was about to be hit in his weak area, Kuu said with a look of incomprehension.

“Government officials? What is going on?”

Ferris nodded her head gravely,

“Mm-hmm. Our mission is to uncover all the improper actions of the governors of different districts to save the people. We were sent here to investigate because the nearby governor Fahier has been acting quite suspiciously lately...”

She took out a piece of paper from the chest as she said this,

“This man, Fahier... He has actually been coveting the tax payment, doing these improper actions!”

Kuu became more confused,

“That... I have something I want to ask...”

“What?”

“The governor who rules this district seems to be called Belos...”

Ferris did not seem disturbed,

“Yes, Fahier is his nickname. The nobles call him Fahier-chan.”

Upon hearing this, Ryner said,

“...You can actually say it’s a nickname... You actually told this nonsensical lie with a straight face... Ah, no no... I understand, please don’t step on me...”

He rose from the floor, ignoring the pain of being stepped on,

“That’s how it is. Let’s go quickly, Ferris. The next evil governor is waiting for us.”

“Mm-hmm, that’s right.”

As the two of them spoke, they prepared to leave the area.

They walked out of the hall and headed up the steps...

“ ...”

“ ...”

But for some reason, Sui and Kuu followed them quietly...

Ryner turned around and asked,

“I say, why are the two of you following us?”

Kuu replied,

“Ah? Aren’t you going to punish that evil corrupted governor? Then, just by following you, if we’re lucky, maybe we’ll be able to get a fraction of that money?”

Sui entered his own daze,

“Yes, secret investigation officers... what a mysterious name... ‘The Emotionless Woman Secret Investigation Squad’... Yes, compared to treasure, this topic is much better!”

Ryner seemed to be rather helpless,

“I meant are you going to continue following us...?”

“Of course!”

Ryner and Ferris continued to walk up the stairs...

Ryner said weakly,

“...Ai... what should we do... if we bring them along, we’ll be unable to find the

relic.”

“Mm-hmm.”

“Then what should we do?”

“Mm, no matter what, according to what you said, the relic can be dug out from underground?”

“Ai, you really want to dig?”

Ignoring Ryner’s annoyed tone, Ferris continued,

“Then we still aren’t prepared, we have to make preparations for a long stay in the forest, and we’ll need shovels, right?”

“... I say, you seriously want to dig... dig... You’re going to trust that two thousand year old legend and dig... You’re not joking?”

“Mm-hmm, if what you said is the ‘truth’.”

“Ah, is that so... ah, no, don’t worry about the future. Yes, that’s right... Then the next destination is the city... but what about the two of them behind us?”

“Hmm...”

“...”

Ryner and Ferris exchanged looks...

Then they started to sprint wildly.

Upon seeing this, Kuu and Sui shouted,

“Ah, why-why do you have to run! Wait!”

“Ohh, did something happen? This is indeed the investigation officers! They have to investigate!”

The two of them chased after Ryner and Ferris...

But Ferris and Ryner did not turn back, they increased their speed and escaped...

She dreamt.

It was that dream again.

It was that dream of the orphanage.

It was the dream of that boy.

The dream of Ryner Lute...

And like usual... like usual, it was filled with death...

In the dream.

The boy's unexpected change was sudden.

That opportunity was only a small matter...

She had been severely injured by the instructor because she had made a mistake in her lesson and collapsed on the floor, this was an opportunity...

It was a fatal wound.

This attack had made her body lose strength and her head started to bleed. The amount of blood was more than expected and she was unable to move. The fresh blood spread on the ground. Her body could not move.

This represented death.

People who were unable to fight could only die.

This was the only rule in the orphanage.

The number of people who could survive had been decided. If one person died, another person could be saved. So everyone would not let off the people that could not move.

Not only the adults.

Even the friends who had been laughing and chatting with her yesterday lunged towards the motionless her.

This was the end...

She thought.

Her vision had gone blurry. The fresh blood flowing from her head made her

vision become more blurry. In this blurry world, she still tried to look at her surroundings.

She tried to find the silhouette of that boy...

She wanted to look at his silhouette for the last time.

Where was he?

She searched for him

What would he say if he saw me in this terrible condition?

Would he be angry?

Or would he feel slightly sad?

She thought...

But the boy did not reveal a sad expression.

There was no rage.

He only blankly and dazedly used that intrigued expression to look at her...

“...Mi-Milk... Why... ai... what should I do... it’s as if everything...what... is this... save... save... Ah, ah, ah, aaaaaaaaaaaaaahahahahahahahahahaha”

She heard his laughter.

What happened next was unbelievable.

The people disappeared one by one. Like words, they disappeared, shattered and collapsed...

She could only hear that unending laughter.

The presences around her disappeared one by one...

The moaning sound did not stop.

“Mon-monster!?”

“What is that person!? Quick, escape quickly...”

“Stop Ryner!? Stop aaaahh....”

“Don’t kill me. Don’t, I don’t want to die!? I don’t...”

Every sentence stopped before they were completed.

When everything had disappeared...

Only she and Ryner were left...

She would be killed...

She knew this. She already understood. Whoever was standing by her, was

not Ryner.

This was the true power of the Alpha Stigma who would spread disaster and chaos...

This was why he was called a monster and was hated by everyone...

But she only closed her eyes, smiling.

“Are you there? Ryner. Are you going to kill me?”

“...”

Ryner did not reply. But she knew he was there. She could hear his breathing. He was in front of her. He was standing in front of her because he was going to kill her.

“But, you don’t have to mind. I am very happy. I feel that it’s not bad if Ryner kills me.”

“...”

The laughter that she had heard just now could not be heard now.

But she knew that she would be killed. Once an Alpha Stigma bearer went mad, he would be unable to return to normal. So they were unable to survive alongside the humans.

But... even so...

She still wanted to see him one last time.

Even if he wasn’t him anymore, but she had sworn once.

She would never let go of his hand...

She tried her best to wipe away the blood on her face and opened her eyes. She withstood the pain in her eyes and opened her eyes...

But what she saw was a stretch of red.

It was not the blood that had flowed down her face.

Everything living was dead.

Only she and Ryner were left living...

Ryner stood in the middle of the blood stained ground, dazedly looking at her...

“Was... it I, I who killed...? I... I don't want, don't want to kill... I... I am a monster...”

She raised her voice.

“Even if you're a monster, it's fine!”

Ryner looked at her with empty eyes.

Tears flowed out of his eyes.

Tears flowed out of those black eyes with the red five-pointed star, watching her...

She looked at his eyes and said.

“Even if you're a monster, I don't care. You haven't killed me. But everyone else... the adults killed my-my friends and my parents... If you are a monster who hasn't killed me, then I would rather you be a monster! So, don't cry? So...”

But her words were interrupted.

A few black-armored men appeared suddenly and surrounded him.

“This monster is indeed special; he's different from the other Alpha Stigmas recorded. He has a response to #837 as he stopped going berserk. This is worth researching.”

#837 was the number that was allocated for her. In here, they were not called by their names. After all, they were pawns that could be disposed of so there was no need for names.

She had never been treated as a human before.

In the end, she had no name, monster...

But now, she felt somewhat happy because of this.

See, Ryner. I'm like you...

So... you're not alone...

She wanted to say this, but,

"#837 might have some effect in this monster's research work. Don't kill her, take her away." When the black-armored man decided that, a heavy blow struck her from the back...

She lost consciousness.

"Eh... Hufuah~... It was that dream again. I haven't had it for some time... What's happening..."

Milk Callaud woke up as the sun rays shone on her face through the window.

Looking out of the window, she noted that the weather was good and it would be comfortable for the rest of the day.

Milk smiled but suddenly found that there were tracks of tears at the corners of her eyes.

"Ah, I still cried..."

She frantically wiped her tears away and got off her bed, not looking as if she had just woken up.

She started to tidy her bed.

This was the habit that she had started ever since she entered the Callaud family. After arranging her bed, what would await her would be strict training...

It was so strict that she would vomit blood... actually she had vomited blood a few times, but the training would not stop.

This was her usual day.

But she no longer had that training.

Where she was now was not the Callaud House.

No, to be more accurate, it was no within boundaries of the Roland Empire.

This was an inn in one of the cities in Imperial Nelpha. So there would be no teachers or instructors from the Callaud Family here.

But a habit that had been kept for many years could not be changed easily. She did some warm-up exercises to stretch her body and tidied her hair as she

looked in the mirror.

She stretched her limbs,

“Heh, then I’m counting, one~, two~, three~...”

When she reached ten, she had already plaited her hair. She had big adoring eyes and a doll-face. Her body was smaller than what was usual for a sixteen year old, making her look younger than her age.

But even so, she was the sixteen year old leader of the Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad...

At this moment, there was a knock on the door,

“Captain Milk, are you up~?”

“Ah, Luke? It’s alright, I’ve woken up—!”

“Ah, that’s impressive. You actually woke up early.”

“That’s great! I was praised!”

“He he, impressive child. Well, breakfast has been prepared, come down and have it while it’s warm. I’ll wake the rest of the squad.”

“Okay~! But I’m hungry, what’s for breakfast?”

...That seemed like a conversation between a kindergarten teacher and a child...

Even though it was like that, Milk still had the responsibility as the leader of the Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad.

But this was the first mission...

They were an unbelievable elite squad.

Catching citizens of the Roland Empire who could use Roland magic but had left the country for no reason or escaped—this was the Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad who arrested the Taboo Breakers. Ever since the end of the war, most of the combat missions assigned to the Roland army had disappeared, only this duty was the most dangerous as it constantly required the members of the squad to come into contact with danger.

Shouldering such a heavy burden...

“Come down to eat now!!”

Luke opened the door and said loudly.

At this moment, a boy who looked to be slightly older than Milk but still looked to be quite young walked out from the adjacent room. He had a sleepy expression...

“Ah, hu~ Morning... Captain.”

He greeted as he yawned.

Milk smiled,

“Ah, Moe! Good morning. Today’s weather is good! Breakfast is ready!”

“Ah? Really? Was it Luke-senpai who cooked?”

“It seems to be so! Luke cooks delicious meals! Moe, which of Luke’s dishes is your favourite?”

“Yes, as long as it’s curry, I’m fine with it.”

“Yeah! Me too, me too! Because, because I like Luke’s curry the most!”

As soon as she said that, a tall man with a gentle expression, who seemed to be twenty five years old but had white hair walked out of the neighbouring room.

“Really, although I feel happy that you like the curry I cook... but you don’t have to eat curry for breakfast, do you? And today’s breakfast is made by the lady boss.”

Moe said with a tinge of unhappiness,

“What—”

Milk smiled,

“But, but, just by talking about eating, I feel hungry! As long as I’m able to eat with everyone, I’m happy!”

Saying this...

Luke and Moe exchanged glances,

“Ah, what a good child...”

The two of them said, touched.

Let me repeat myself, Milk is the captain, Luke and Moe should be her subordinates...

Luke said,

“Alright! Because Captain has been very good this morning, so everyone will have large servings for breakfast today!”

“Ah? Truly!? That’s awesome!”

An energetic youth who looked to be the same age as Moe jumped out of the room Luke had just exited from, the door slamming open with a loud ‘bang!’

He yelled energetically,

“Ahh, ahh, wait! Is it only Captain who gets to have a large serving? I want to have a large serving too!”

Upon hearing this, Moe said,

“Eh!? Ah, then I want it too, I want it too! Because if Lach can have a large serving, then I can too, right?”

Luke appeared to be rather helpless,

“Alright, then Moe can have a large serving, but because Lach overslept, so he wouldn’t have one~”

“Ahh!?”

Upon seeing Lach’s upset expression, Milk said,

“Then Lach can have mine!”

“Really, Captain! Awesome! I’ll follow Captain for my whole life!”

“Ah, Lach is sly! I’ll follow along, too!”

Luke smiled at their conversation.

“Then let’s stop joking and go eat. Ah, I will give Lach a large serving, so you don’t have to worry.”

“Okay~”

Watching them walk into the canteen, it wasn't the problem of who was the captain but were they really an elite team? Does this question rise in your mind...

Even though it was like that, Milk and her companions' mission was important in maintaining the power between countries.

Protecting the secret of magic...

Every country's magic was different. How was it activated? What was used as its medium? Was there a need to recite the spell? Or was there a magic circle to be drawn? Everything was different... If their magic's secrets were known by other countries, then it was the same as saying that the other countries would know about the Roland Empire's military power, national power and everything else.

If that happened, then war would start easily and in the worst case scenario, the Roland Empire would be wiped out.

So the duty of Milk and her team was especially important.

If a 'Taboo Breaker' escaped, just only this, a war could erupt and cause many people to die.

The mission of killing their ex-comrades...

Their mission was entangled with danger.

The risk was especially high if they had to venture into countries that were unable to help them to catch these people who could work with magic.

The real elite...noble-born people would never work in this environment.

But for the sake of protecting the happiness of their country, friends, family and companions...

Even though they would be hurt, even though they would have to work hard-even though they would be sad...

This was something that needed to be done by someone.

This was the duty they had.

When they reached the canteen, they started eating happily...

Moe said,

“Wa, this is delicious! Come, Lach, try this.”

“Ah, Moe, you know that I hate vegetables.”

“Ah~! Captain Milk! Luke-senpai! Lach’s being picky!”

Luke used that gentle and slight strict expression to look at Lach,

“If you don’t eat it, I won’t give you dessert.”

“Wuuu... I, I know. I’ll eat it... Wu.”

Seeing Lach frantically eating, Milk happily laughed, “Ahaha.”

This was her first time happily having a meal.

As the substitute of the real daughter of the nobles, she had been a convenient fighting marionette. That was her.

There was no need for a useless marionette.

Useless marionettes would be disposed of.

They would not be treated as humans.

Seating at the dining table and talking with her companions, living a happy life every day...

These things were not needed. It wasn’t that they weren’t allowed to have these.

They were not needed.

What she had been demanded to do was to absolutely follow her orders and achieve the highest and required power in the military.

So...

Luke carried a worried expression,

“Ah, Captain. You seem to not have eaten much. Does, does your body feel uncomfortable?”

“Ah?”

Milk raised her head, Lach and Moe had been watching her uneasily for some time.

“Talking about which, you haven’t been talking when we started eating. Is everything alright?”

“Captain Milk... are you feeling unwell?”

Hearing this...

“...”

Milk suddenly...

For that moment, she felt as if she were going to cry.

She had never thought that this day would come.

She had never thought that this would be allowed...

But she was their captain. She could not let them see the weak side of her. This was not needed... She could cry...

So she forced a smile,

“No! I’m feeling great! It’s delicious! I’m going to dig in!!”

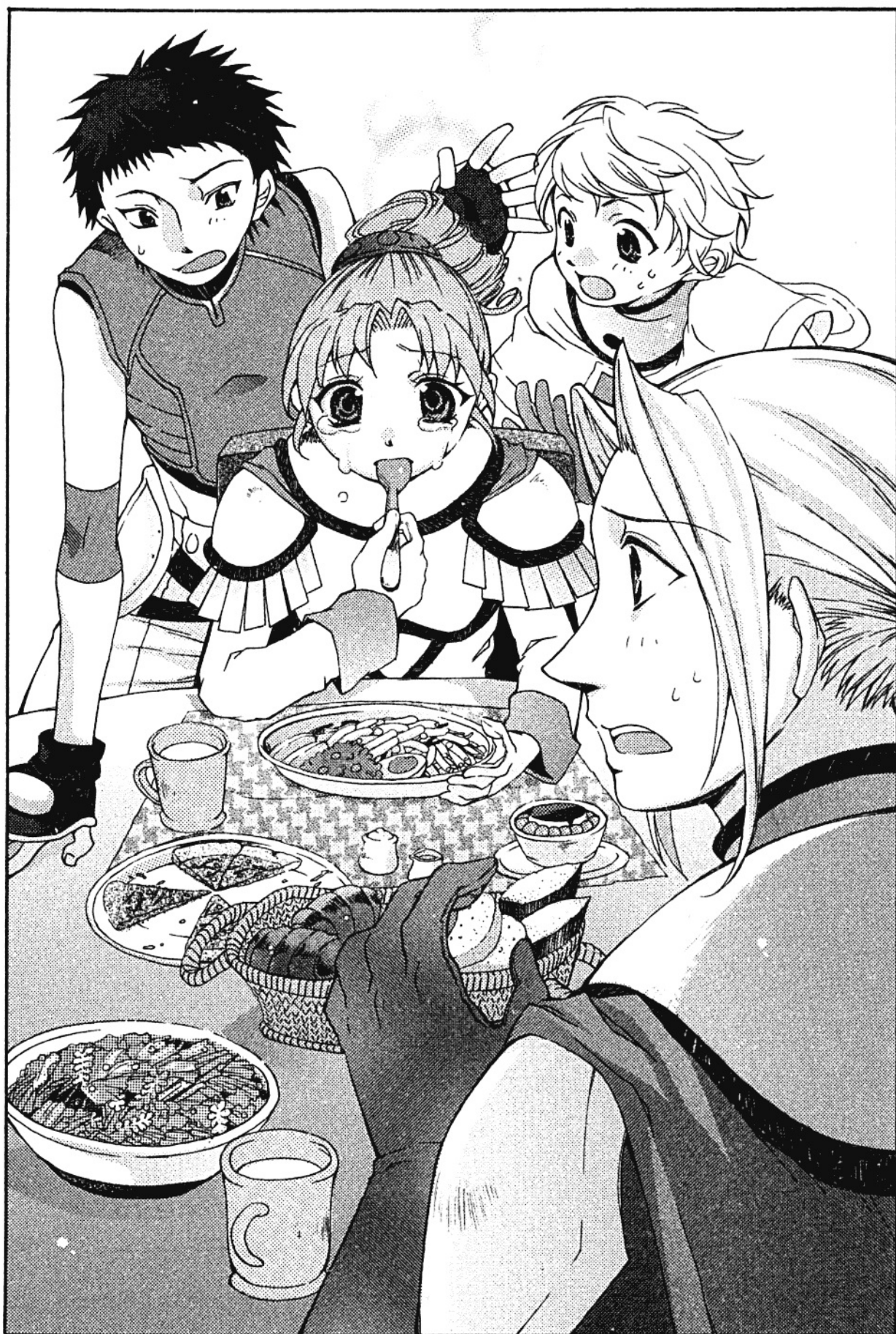
As she said that, she started eating.

She desperately forced a smile.

But her tears still...

Luke, Moe and Lach stood up frantically.

“Wa wa wa wa wa wa wa, Ca-Captain is crying... Wha-wha-wha-what are we to do...”



“Idiot! It’s because you made me eat vegetables! Captain also hates eating vegetables!”

“Ahh!? That can’t be!? Is that true?”

Milk shook her head to their responses.

“No...no... that's not it! That's not it! I’m fine, everyone can continue eating! That that that, this, this isn’t tears.”

But Luke approached her in concern,

“But aren’t you crying? Where is it that pains you? You can’t withhold this from us. If it is painful, then tell us honestly, that would be...”

Milk shook her head again,

“No, it’s not like that, because... eh... I was very happy that I could be with everyone. I’ve never had this... seating with everyone and talking happily... so...”

“Wuuu... I’m touched...”

“Me too... I really want to follow Captain Milk for life...”

Just as the four started crying, the door to the canteen opened... A good-looking, cool youth walked in.

Upon seeing the team of four crying, he revealed a surprised expression,

“... That... what happened to cause this...?”

Milk raised her head,

“Ah... Lear, you’re back!!”

Standing there was the last of her group, Lear. He was in charge of gathering information in the group. Ever since they had reached this city yesterday night, he had started collecting information.

Lear nodded,

“I’m back, Captain Milk, Luke-senpai. Now, what is going on?”

Hearing this, Moe replied,

“Listen to me, Le...”

He had not finished speaking when Lach stopped him in a soft voice,
“Idiot, repeating what happened in front of Captain-she might be embarrassed.”

“Ahh, is that so. Then, Lear, we’ll continue later.”

Lear tilted his head, more confused,

“Ah? Is it something that is very touching?”

Luke drew the topic away from that by saying,

“How was it, Lear?”

Milk added,

“Ah, breakfast is ready. Do you want to join in, Lear?”

Luke nodded his head,

“Ah, yes. Let’s talk about this while we eat, Lear.”

“No, actually...”

Lear looked at the door behind them, then,

“Actually I’ve found someone who has some interesting intelligence and brought them here...”

Luke narrowed his eyes in that moment, appearing to be somewhat nervous. It was different from the gentle expression he’d had earlier.

“Are you saying they’re asking for something as a price for their information? You brought them here without extracting the information from them, which means that you wanted to consult me about the fees for the intelligence... No, it’s because you wanted to discuss this with Captain Milk, right?”

Lear turned somewhat frustrated,

“About this...”

He had not finished when the door behind him slammed open,

“What is it? What is happening!? Is the price of providing breakfast for us in exchange for the information so difficult? Isn’t this room filled with the smell of food! What do you say? Are you going to treat Sui-niichan and I to a meal? Or

do you not want to? What do you say? If you don't decide quickly, we'll starve to death!"

Suddenly, a girl walked in. She was smaller than Milk, around twelve or thirteen years old. In contrast with her tough tone, she was a beautiful girl.

"Ah, it's like that, don't mind my younger sister, do you truly intend to treat us to a meal? I would prefer to eat fish in the morning..."

Lear looked at this nonsensical pair and expressed his frustration,

"It's like that, anyway I need to treat them to breakfast, so I thought why not bring them here to eat with Luke-senpai and everyone else, so that everyone can listen to what they have to say..."

Luke looked at Milk,

"What do we do?"

Milk nodded her head,

"Then, let's eat together!"

Just like that, breakfast continued.

As they continued eating, Lear glanced at the two people who were eating frantically and explained,

"According to them, they are siblings. The brother is Sui Orla and the younger sister is Kuu Orla, they have been wandering the world in order to expand their horizons..."

As he reached here, Kuu interrupted,

"No! It's the other way round! The other way round, the other way round! It was I who brought Onii-san to that place! If there wasn't me, Onii-san would be someone who would not do anything!"

Hearing this, Lear looked at Sui with an uneasy expression. But Sui smiled foolishly like usual,

"It's fine, I don't mind. To tell the truth, I can't do anything, so I'm always looked after by my sister. Ahaha."

“That’s right! If I don’t work hard, Onii-san would definitely run off to somewhere else and then die horribly! That’s why I hate authors! As long as they see their dreams, their ability to survive becomes zero!”

“But Kuu is very hardworking...”

“Really... the gods are unfair. I don’t have the ability to look after you... See, you have soup on the corner of your mouth.”

Saying this, Kuu wiped the corner of Sui’s mouth...

Milk smiled at them, although she treated him harshly, they were siblings and their relationship was good.

She was slightly jealous.

Luke said,

“If the two of you have any information, we hope you can tell us... As well...”

Saying this, he looked at Lear. Lear nodded his head,

“Yes, I’ve already told them we’re the Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad from the Roland Empire and that we’ve received permission from Imperial Nelpha to investigate the ‘Taboo Breakers’ from Roland.”

“Alright, then.”

Luke raised his head.

“Ah, that, I’m busy eating. Sui, you tell them.”

“Ah!? I tell them? You know I won’t say it right?”

“You know if I say too much, the other party would be troubled. If it’s Sui who tells them, then it would be better!”

Luke smiled,

“I’m sorry to trouble you.”

Sui started, his content was roughly like this.

In a fortress a little to the southern side of this town, they had met two people. One was a lazy person and the other was a good-looking warrior...

This pair had said that they had received secret orders from the Nelpha king

and they called themselves the Secret Investigation Officers.

Hearing this, Milk said,

“Nelpha’s Secret Investigation Officers?”

Luke added,

“That’s interesting. Is there such a job in Nelpha? This is a little like the investigation work in Roland? But this is our job?”

Kuu continued,

“But from our perspectives, they were definitely lying. Right? Sui-niichan.”

Sui nodded his head and smiled foolishly,

“That... They were definitely lying~”

Moe couldn’t help but ask,

“Ah? Lying? Why do you think so... Ah, ouch!? What are you doing, Lach! Ow...”

Lach knocked on Moe’s head, interrupting him and said,

“Idiot! Leave this to Luke-senpai, didn’t we decide this when we were in Luke’s team.”

“Ah... that... that’s right. Then, then Luke-senpai. I’m sorry to trouble you.”

Luke sighed after looking at the two who had interrupted their conversation,

“I apologize. Then... why did you think the two of them were lying?”

Sui wanted to reply, but Kuu covered his mouth and smiled meaningfully,

“Ah, are you interested? Interested? Then, let’s talk about this at lunch...”

At this moment, Luke immediately said,

“There’s no problem with lunch, dinner and the stay for tonight—we’ll pay for these expenses. We hope that your brother will be able to write a good novel, too.”

“Really!?”

“That’s great, Kuu.”

Looking at the happy duo, Luke continued,

“Then you don’t have to worry about tonight’s stay. Continuing on our earlier topic, why did you think that the two of them were lying?”

Kuu nodded,

“That was simple! Because the two of them... wore armor with the insignia of Roland.”

When he heard this, Luke revealed an expression of surprise and turned to Milk,

“It seems as if Major Miller’s information about the ‘Taboo Breakers’ was right. About the two who were escaping towards Nelpha.”

Milk seemed enlightened,

“That means, it’s really...”

“Yes, we must catch them. This is the first mission.”

“...Yes.”

Milk nodded her head forcefully. Then she looked in the direction of Sui and Kuu,

“Then, about the direction in which the two people wearing the Roland insignia escaped in...”

Kuu replied,

“We know where it is! Or to be more accurate, from last night until we reached this city, we have been following them. But we lost track of them...”

Moe couldn’t help but cry,

“In this city...”

Then he was hit by Lach again...

“Fool!”

“Wuuu... I’m sorry...”

Sui ignored them,

“But we can predict the place where they are headed in. I think they will probably return to the forest surrounding that fortress.”

Luke asked,

“Why do you think so?”

Sui replied,

“About this, the duo seemed to be searching for something. And that something seemed to be in the forest. We heard this when they were talking. Ah, but I feel that if they knew that we had heard this, then we could have been killed, so we’ll pretend we didn’t hear anything... right?”

Kuu nodded,

“Yes, those two were so strong that it was scary. They were definitely dangerous characters. But Sui said that they would definitely be good material for his story so he wanted to do something foolish like following them...”

“Ah? But didn’t Kuu...”

“I was fine with anything!”

Milk and the rest ignored the nonsensical ways of the siblings and started to discuss.

Lear crossed his arms and said,

“Feeling that they would be killed if the two of them knew what they were talking about... According to this, the duo must be quite fierce. What are they finding... and their item is actually in the forest...”

Luke nodded,

“It must be something dirty that they buried... Or maybe that forest has some vegetation that can cause hallucinations that are forbidden in Roland and have been smuggling them frequently... No matter what, they are breaking the law, that much can be confirmed. What should we do, Captain. The information from Sui and Kuu was gotten last night... It’s quite fresh. Should we consider leaving early so that we can chase them down?”

Milk nodded and closed her eyes, entering deep thought.

This was the first mission.

What followed might be a combat with those violent people who had escaped from Roland. Their opponents would be powerful and they could use magic. According to the source, there was a companion...

It was a dangerous mission.

But she had understood this from the very beginning. I can't avoid doing this, I must catch that 'Taboo Breaker'. Then I have to make sure that there are no sacrifices from my team. These two points.

She did not want to see anyone else die.

She had act quickly so that there would be no sacrifices. She had to make use of this opportunity. She had to be a step quicker than the 'Taboo Breakers' and lie in wait to ambush them. This was the best plan.

Then...

Milk revealed a determined expression and said.

"Alright, let's leave immediately!"

"Yes!"

Her companions chorused. As they said this, they prepared quickly and prepared to leave...

Seeing this, Kuu who was still eating, said,

"I say, wait! That..."

But without waiting for her to finish speaking, Luke placed a few gold coins in front of her,

"Thank you for your help, we are in a rush, we'll leave first."

"Okay. As long as we have this, we have no use for you. Good luck."

She waved at them. Milk waved back.

"Thank you! Good bye!"

Milk's team started to chase after the Taboo Breakers.

Three days later.

On a night where the moon shone brightly.

Milk and company were in the thick foliage of the forest... controlling their breathing.

(They're here... They're really here... 'Taboo Breakers'...)

She quickly discovered their targets.

Like what their source had told them, it was a pair.

A tall, slim and slouching black-haired man. And a unbelievably beautiful blond warrior woman.

"...It's the 'Taboo Breakers'..."

She whispered, feeling her pulse rate increase.

Wa, it was beating really fast...

She made a sound and controlled her heart. She had not felt like this for a very long time. Even if she had never stopped training or even felt death, she had never felt nervous. No matter what tests she'd had, she had never felt nervous. But when the 'Taboo Breakers' appeared in front of her eyes, she had felt unexpectedly nervous.

What followed next could be a massacre between the two parties...

If that happened... If that happened, then Luke, Lach, Lear and Moe... everyone would be in danger. When she was near death, she had never felt nervous, but knowing that everyone's lives were her responsibility...

No, no... what should she do...

Towards the cowardly side of her, she shook her head hard.

(No, you can't be discouraged, Milk. You can do this! Yes! Don't worry, as long as I work hard, this kind of people will be easily dealt with!) She told herself that in the dark forest.

Don't worry, as long as I follow how I trained, move with accuracy, no one will be injured, this will be successful!

At this moment, Luke's deep voice spoke from behind,

"Captain, although we can't see clearly from this position, but they do have the Roland insignia on their chests."

"Then they are 'Taboo Breakers'?"

Saying this, Milk turned her attention to the two people. Like what their source had told them, they were using shovels to dig the ground. If this was the case, then the theory that Luke had about smuggling was impossible, that meant that they had to be digging out something illegal?

Anyway, this hinted at crime.

The man was unusually unmotivated, from his lazy movements, he seemed to have abandoned all risks in his life.

The plan about letting them turn themselves in honestly...

"Very grim."

Milk said softly.

What should we do? They don't seem to have discovered us, so we should take the chance to capture them. This is the most effective plan, isn't it? Then how should I strategize? There are two methods. One is under the circumstance that we do not know how strong they are, separate them and focus our attacks. This way, when they retaliate, they will employ a similar method, this allows for our survival rate to increase...

Another method is to trust Luke and everyone's abilities, spread out and attack them. Under this situation, we can prevent them from escaping and increase the probability of capturing both of them. But similarly, the risk that Luke and everyone else face will increase...

Then, which should I choose?

At this moment, Luke asked,

"What should we do? Captain."

At Luke's sudden question, Milk started,

"Ah? Eh, that, what do I do, Luke."

“It’s your choice, Captain. Do we attack? Or should we continue to observe the situation?”

Milk pondered.

She had already made a conclusion. They could only attack. If they continued to observe, they might be discovered by the other party. They had to attack immediately. It was only whether they should focus their attack or disperse and attack...

Milk looked at Luke’s face, then turned her eyes to the target.

Should she choose the success of the task or the safety of her companions...

There was only one choice.

Milk revealed a determined expression and said.

“Gather all the squad members. Capture them.”

“I understand.”

Saying this, Luke disappeared into the thick forest.

Not long after.

Luke, Lach, Lear and Moe had gathered together and were preparing for the upcoming combat.

After Luke confirmed, he said,

“Captain, please give the orders.”

Hearing this, Milk said,

“Eh, ah, right. Yes~”

Saying this, she looked at the sky. The clouds were slowly, slowly covering the moon. She made sure that the surroundings were covered in darkness, “Anyway, let’s use magic first to control them, then Luke, Lach, Lear use weapons to attack. I will use magic and Moe will back me up.”

Luke revealed a satisfied expression and nodded, then the battle started.

Milk started to draw a complicated design in the air with her finger. This was the special magic that Roland had that allowed them to draw the magical circle

in the air.

It was faster than the normal magic.

It was completed in a moment.

“WHAT I SEEK IS THUNDER>>>IZUCHI!”

In a moment, a strong light was released from the magical circle and lightning accompanied with the sound of thunder headed towards the target!

It should be like this...

But—in a split second, the unmotivated man who had his back towards them had already started drawing in the air and sketched a magical circle that absorbed Milk’s lightning...

“What!?”

Milk and her subordinates cried in surprised at the same time.

“Were-were we discovered!?”

“No... even so, they were able to block at that moment... we didn’t think that was possible...”

Then, what was that just now?

What was that?

To tell the truth, Milk’s magical power should have been very strong. It was at least stronger than the ordinary person. To react to the speed of Milk’s magic and form the counteract, especially under ambush...

This...wasn’t even human.

This was a moment where everyone could understand the truth. So the impact on Milk and her subordinates was quite big.

Anyway, using magic to counteract was a difficult magic that had little worth. But the magic to decipher the magic being used by your opponent, analyzing it and then coming up with a method to counter it...

No one was able to do that.

If there was...

Then that would be a magician that she could not compare to, or it was...

A monster...

Oh no oh no oh no oh no oh no oh no!?

How would she protect-protect everyone...

At this moment, the blond woman reacted to Milk's attack and unsheathed the sword at her waist.

Luke shouted,

"Oh no! Protect Cap..."

But his voice was cut off.

The female warrior moved at an unbelievable speed, Luke didn't even have to time to draw his sword and his neck was struck with the butt of the sword.

Luke collapsed.

The remaining three people were struck on their neck with the butt of the sword, only Milk was left...

Milk blankly stared at this.

This was unbelievable.

The woman's movements-not to mention the sword movements-were so fast that she could not see them at all.

Luke and her team had collapsed...

She had not protected them. But they were still alive. Then I...

At this moment, the blond female warrior in front of her looked in her direction...

I will be killed!

She thought. After seeing such a strong power, she momentarily thought of giving up.

But... She looked at Luke and the others on the floor...

That sentence resounded in her mind.

Long ago.

In that orphanage...

What that boy had said.

"So you can't die."

That sentence had supported her until now.

In this place, she couldn't...

And she could not die without protecting her companions. She definitely couldn't die...

The woman in front of her moved her sword.

"Damn it! I can't! I can't be killed by you!! I still have things I have to do..."

But she spoke until here.

The swordswoman struck in the direction of the magical circle that Milk was frantically constructing.

"Being killed and not accomplishing what you want to do are two different things."

That unbelievably beautiful woman said.

But she had no expressions...

That face made one think of assassins. Wiped of emotions, only living to assassinate...

She couldn't win... that was what she thought. They were on a different level from her. No matter whether it was that unmotivated man or this beauty...

But...

"But, but even so, I can't be killed by you!!"

This moment,

"Eh, is that so. Then escape."

"Ah?"

Upon hearing this unexpected interruptions, Milk stopped. She thought she

would be killed...

But the beautiful swordswoman in front of her continued with that empty expression of hers.

At the same time, she pointed behind her,

“That foolish-looking man who is walking over now is a pervert. If you don’t escape now, he will capture you and do this and that kind of stuff...”

“I say. Don’t say those kind of things with that emotionless face.”

At this moment—

That voice... that way of talking, her body reacted unconsciously.

She had heard this voice before.

It sounded tired and unmotivated. But actually it was very gentle...

What, what am I saying! That can’t be possible! Because the ‘Taboo Breaker’ here is a dangerous character that can block my magic easily!

No... If it is him... If it is his power, then he could block my magic... But even so, he is not a pervert, he is not a enemy of womankind! He couldn’t abandon me and go on this strange trip with this kind of beauty!

In that moment, Milk understood.

She was going to die... Because she was going to die here, so she would suddenly hear that boy, Ryner’s voice.

No... maybe Ryner was already dead.

She thought until here.

So, Ryner had come to meet her.

Milk had finally understood. So she would die here. But... but if it was like that...

I have to finish my task.

I won’t let a pervert do what he likes!

So that Luke and the others could wake up and escape, she had to be in an advantageous position, at least she would have to harm the two of them...

Deciding this, Milk looked at the pervert and shouted,

“What is that, you pervert!? Do you think I would let you do what you like without fighting back...Ai...”

Then,

“...Ah...?”

Milk stared at the man and froze...

She saw the black-haired man's face, she actually knew...

Along with his black eyes, the red five-pointed star had appeared because he had read Milk's magic formation...

Anyone would hate that curse... That power...

Her body trembled.

How could this, this was impossible...

“Liar... That five-pointed star... Black hair... You are Ryner!?”

“Eh? How do you know my name?”

The man looked at Milk in surprise.

No... this, this was really... really Ryner...

When she understood this, Milk felt a little dizzy.

The two of them stared at one another for a while...

Then that emotionless woman spoke,

“Hmm. What's wrong, you know each other. Was it someone you attacked before, Ryner?”

“No!!”

Milk and Ryner yelled together...

Milk frowned and looked at the beauty in front of her. Who was this woman. She didn't even understand Ryner. Ahh, really, this wasn't the time to be saying these...

Because Ryner was right in front of her now! She had always, always been

finding him, always wanted to meet him, always wanted to thank Ryner... what should she do now. Where should she start from? Should I start from myself? Should I start from what happened after I left the orphanage? Ahh, or should I start from... that... promise to marry?

Wa... no, I can't pop that out suddenly. I-if I knew this would happen, I would have applied cosmetics.

Where, where should she start from, where should...

Milk's mind whirled as she said,

"But, but, then you... are really Ryner!? Ryner Lute? The one in Roland #307 Special Facilities...?"

Ryner appeared to be surprised,

"Ah, you actually know about that facility. But, who are you?"

Milk felt so dizzy that she felt like she was going to stop breathing.

"Ah? Don't you remember me? It's Milk? It's me, Milk!"

Ryner revealed an expression of enlightenment....

"Ahh, ahh, who... is that?"

"It-it can't be? You-you even forgot about that? That-that promise to we-we-wed when I was brought from the orphanage..."

As she finished speaking, the blond beautiful woman said expressionlessly,

"So it's like that! You started using wedding promises to bait young girls into become your prey..."

"It's not like that!"

Ryner replied weakly...

"But, about that. Anyway, do that to her, Ferris." He gave the blond woman a meaningful glance.

"Yes, alright."

Suddenly, the two of them caught Milk and used the rope that Ryner brought to tie her up... Milk was dazed.

What? What was happening? Why was Ryner...

At this moment, Ferris asked,

“But do you recognize this young lady?”

“Eh~”

Ryner pondered over this.

Milk couldn't help but yell,

“You can't recall it!?”

But Ryner was like his old self,

“Wu... no. I can't recall anything. But it's like that, isn't it? We grew up in that orphanage and you had a wedding promise with me when you were brought by the nobles? Then you wanted to marry me, no matter what, so you chased after me?”

“No, no! That's wrong... we did promise to marry once... But, but that was when we were young... But anyway, we are childhood friends...”

What, what am I saying. I only continued to live because I wanted to meet Ryner again...

But Ryner... forgot me...

She felt like crying when she thought of that.

Did those days in the orphanage had meant nothing to Ryner, did he think of them as ordinary days...? He actually, actually...

At this moment, Ferris spoke,

“Then, why did this childhood friend, who this unfair man easily abandoned, attack us?”

“Abandon... I, I wasn't abandoned! That was only when we were children... Wu.”

Milk stopped when the sword pointed at her neck. This woman was dangerous. Although she was a beauty, but she was extremely strong... this was lethal to a mage as she had an abnormal strength. With her strength, no matter

how strong the mage was, he would be killed before he managed to activate his magic.

I can't win...

Even so, Ryner will...

This dangerous beauty said emotionlessly.

"Answer me."

Milk looked at Luke and the others, if she did not reply now, there was the chance that her companions might lose their lives...

This woman was this dangerous.

There were only two choices: betray her country or not save her companions...

Milk made her decision without any delay.

"I... am the leader of the Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad. You are 'Taboo Breakers' that Roland will arrest. That's, that's it! Even if you kill my teammates, and me, it's meaningless! The information on what you have been doing in this forest will be sent back to the country quickly. Even if they lose contact with us, they will send another Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad here!"

This was a lie.

The information about what Ryner and his companion had been doing had not been sent back to the country. So if Milk and rest were killed here, then everything would end. But, for the sake of rescuing her companions, she could only do this...

Hearing this, Ryner was surprised,

"Ah!? What is happening, Ferris!? We're chased by Roland? How come I didn't hear of this? And, and we're here because of Sion's order..."

Suddenly, the sword of the dangerous beauty gleamed. From Milk's point of view, it was a pretty skill she had. The sword stopped, pressing lightly against the skin of Ryner's neck, "You're so troublesome~... So I said do you want to really open this head of yours..."

“No, that...”

Ryner swallowed what he was about to say with a tired and desperate expression.

In that moment, Milk understood.

So this was what was going on!!

Ryner, Ryner was only tricked, threatened and used by this slightly prettier but fierce and violent woman.

She must have found his weak point...

As long as soon as she thought of this, the riddle was solved. Even if he said he did not remember or know Milk, it was because Milk was an important existence to Ryner, so he did not want that dangerous woman to know of this...

What, what should I do. I have to rescue Ryner. Aside from me, there's no one else who can rescue Ryner!

You have to think, Milk! What did Ryner want to tell me in that conversation. Because Ryner has an intelligent mind, he is a hero who can obtain the highest scores under any circumstances...

What did Ryner want to tell me...

What did Ryner...

“Any-anyway, we are here because of Sion's order...”

Ferris cut Ryner's words off.

Sion... this must be the keyword. That man, Sion, was the boss of some criminal organization that was using Ryner.

Then, how should she snatch Ryner away from this criminal organization...

Just as Milk continued to think...

Ryner and Ferris continued to talk. Ferris was withdrawing the sword from his neck and smoothly sliding it back into its sheathe.

“Alright, we'll continue with the nonsense later. We're being chased by Roland now. The Nelpha soldiers are also after us. But, according to our orders,

we cannot kill the opponents. If we kill the people from Roland, then we will be interrogated. If we kill the people from other countries, there might be a war. The situation now is very dangerous. If you understand, then continue our mission quickly. Dig quickly.”

“Wait, wait a moment, I said I have never heard of...”

Whoosh!

“Ah, alright, alright. I’ll do it, I’ll do it, fine!? Please keep your sword!”

Saying that, they returned to the place where they using the shovels to dig.

Seeing this, Milk yelled,

“Wa-wait! Untie these ropes!”

Ryner and his companion ignored her.

“Ahh, I’m lazy, I can’t do this. I’m tired. How many pits have we dug since yesterday?”

“Seven.”

“And we didn’t guess correctly for all of them, right? But it’s normal if we didn’t guess correctly.”

“But didn’t you say it was here?”

“... But~ It has already been two hundred years. This place does have the legend of the heroes—”

Ryner told the beautiful swordswoman as he dug slowly.

“About the weapon that the Hero used, even if we dig this deep pit, I think we will still be unable to find it. But it was me who made this suggestion to dig... No, but this is impossible. Roland must have misunderstood, coming here to capture us...”

Saying this, Ryner looked in Milk’s direction, sighing,

“I can’t do this, can we go back there? I can’t do this, can’t do this can’t do this can’t do this...”

At this moment.

The shovel made a sound 'kachang!', as if it had hit something hard, stopping Ryner...

Ferris raised her head and looked at Ryner.

The two were silent,

"This, this is a joke, isn't it?"

Ryner raised his head, feeling amused.

Ferris shrugged. Although it was impossible to guess what she was thinking from her unemotionless expression, but this was probably to express her own surprise.

Anyway, the two of them continued to dig.

Then—

"This, this can't be..."

What they had dug out...

It was something... that seemed to be a dagger. It wasn't completely a dagger because the blade was made of a green inorganic matter and it did not look like it was made for cutting anything... It was only due to its short blade and handle, and looked like a dagger...

Ferris asked,

"Is this the sword that was left from the legend of Heroes that you told me? It doesn't look like a sword..."

But Ryner didn't reply Ferris, his unmotivated eyes had narrowed, seriously analyzing this dagger.

"What is this material... And what exactly is this faint inscription..."

"What is it? Is it the same as what your essay said?"

"... Don't rush me. I still don't know... it seems to have signs of using some

sort of power... Eh? Ah, if I do it like this..."

The two of them carried out their muttered conversation.

At this moment, in another place.

Milk, who was left aside by Ryner and Ferris, was struggling to remove the rope that was wrapped around her body.

She crawled, like a green worm, to the side of Luke and the others, and bumped into them,

"Alright, wake up quickly! Luke, Lach, Lear, Moe!"

The one who reacted to voice and woke up first was Luke.

"Wuuu... Ah! Captain Milk! Are you alright?"

"Yes! What about you, Luke? You're not injured, are you? Are you alright?"

Luke moved his neck to check,

"It seems that I'm fine. But... How did..."

"I'll explain later, wake everyone else first."

As she said this, they woke everyone else one by one.

Then when everyone had woken up...

Moe said,

"Wa!? We're tied up!"

Lach added,

"Wu... Nh, ha! Damn it... I can't break it..."

The last was Lear, who moved his wrist calmly. There was an odd 'kacha!' sound from his wrist, but he shook his head,

"... I'm sorry. I'm unable to pull free from the rope even though I dislocated my wrist. These Taboo Breakers aren't ordinary people."

As he said this, there was a 'kacha!' sound again and he relocated his joint...

Moe frowned,

“Le-Lear, was that the sound of you dislocating your joint?”

“Eh? Yes...”

“Wa... It seems painful. Are you alright? Why do you look like it’s nothing to be worried about?”

Lach replied,

“Don’t you know how to dislocate your wrist joint? Shouldn’t you have learnt it in the beginning of the military education?”

“Ahh!? I didn’t learn it! To be more accurate, I don’t want to learn it! Captain Milk. Captain shouldn’t know this kind of skill that seems painful, right?”

Towards this, Milk said,

“Ah? I’ve received training in how to dislocate almost all the joints in my body except for my neck?”

Milk’s reply made the whole squad fall silent...

Luke said,

“A-all of them?”

“...I am reminded once again that the path that Captain took was so painful...”

Lear shook his head and sighed.

Lach’s and Moe’s response was,

“The whole body?”

“It, it seems as if the pain is unimaginable...”

It was a warm exchange.

But Milk studied her surroundings.

It was no time to be talking casually. What was most important was how should she save Ryner. For the sake of doing that, she had to get rid of these ropes before that dangerous beauty returned...

At this moment.

She discovered that the voices of some people were approaching.

“Hey, it should be somewhere near here, right? The place where the Roland spy escaped this morning.”

“Those guys... attacked the fortress of Nelpha, and used magic to attack the patrol unit... There should be a limit to how they look down on us!”

“That’s right! We have to prove our worth to them! We have to catch them and force them to tell the reason why they infiltrated that fortress... why they were wandering around this area. And why they captured that beautiful woman... heh, heh heh heh. That’s why we called out a team made out of fifty people.”

Hearing this, Milk’s subordinates exchanged looks and breathed in deeply.

Luke said softly,

“...Yes. Nelpha’s security soldiers. It’s a good thing we’ve gotten permission from Nelpha to chase the Taboo Breakers from Roland. If we were caught, there would be no problem. But it would take some time for them to identify us. If that happens, then the Taboo Breakers will escape...”

But Milk ignored Luke and looked in the direction of the Nelphan soldiers.

Oh no, they were looking for Ryner and that woman.

Ryner had seemed to do something bad. This could be confirmed. And the Nelpha soldiers had brought fifty soldiers to deal with them...

To catch Ryner and that woman...

This situation was not good!!

What to do. Ryner was clearly innocent, if he was caught by the Nelpha soldiers...

In that moment, the word ‘death’ flashed across her mind. If he was caught, Ryner would be killed...

Milk shook her head.

I will definitely not allow that to happen!

There was still time. If I tell Ryner about the presence of the Nelpha soldiers,

Ryner can escape...

If it's now...

Even if we are caught, it will be fine. But Ryner...

Luke said, "We have to lie down, so that the Nelpha soldiers don't discover us..."

But Milk didn't hear what he said.

I... I have to protect Ryner!

She opened her mouth,

"Toi-toilet!?"

"Ah?"

Luke was shocked, but Milk continued,

"Wait!? You two, don't you feel embarrassed about tying a girl up! Pervert! Release me!! ... I should say, please untie me! There are many inconvenient things that a girl has to do! That, for example... toi-toilet issues and the like... Don't make me say it out loud!!"

Hearing this, Luke frantically tried to stop her,

"Ca-Captain. This is the enemy's territory? If you say that out loud... Bear with it!"

But Luke's shout was fruitless. Like what she expected, the Nelpha soldiers yelled,

"Found them! They're there! Gather the group! We have to make them pay for what they did the previous time."

Towards the situation, Lach and Moe shouted,

"This can't be!? This is a joke, right?"

"What should we do, what should we do."

Lear continued,

"Isn't this too troublesome. What is the captain thinking..."

He narrowed his eyes at Luke to confirm his suspicions. Luke nodded his head and turned to Milk,

“What is it? Captain.”

Towards Luke who was asking gently, Milk couldn't help but look down.

She couldn't say...

About Ryner... Ryner being chased after by Roland...

But, I don't want to lie to this gentle Luke...

But Luke suddenly smiled gently,

“Is that so. There seems to be some reason. That's fine. We'll be on Captain's side. Alright, let's think of what we should do in this situation.”

Hearing this, Milk... bit her lip.

“That, Luke...”

Just when she was about to say something,

“What is this! It's not the people from this morning.”

“But, these people have the Roland insignia. They must be the companions of that detestable duo.”

A large number of Nelpha soldiers surrounded them at this moment.

Milk frantically tried to explain, but she heard Luke saying calmly,

“Please calm down. We aren't any suspicious...”

But the Nelpha soldiers shouted,

“Don't lie! You Roland bastards! Just when your king said he wanted to deepen the relations between our countries, he immediately sent spies over! I was a fool in trusting you Roland bastards!”

“Please wait! We really aren't any suspicious characters. We are the Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad and we have gained the Imperial Nelpha's permission...”

Just as Luke was desperately trying to explain...

Boom! A bright light shone across the sky and thunder rumbled above Milk

and the other's heads.

Following that was a dazzling bright light.

The Nelpha soldiers looked to the sky and cried out in surprise.

“Wu, wa!?”

“What, what was that!?”

Luke squinted,

“What's going on? Just now that was... Roland's magic... IZUCHI...”

But their voices stopped halfway through what they were speaking. The shouts of the surrounding Nelpha soldiers had suddenly disappeared as well.

Milk and Luke exchanged glances.

Both of them understood what was happening now.

This special magic that made the surrounding noises disappear and causing silence...

This was an ANTE in Roland magic. This was used to counter the magic from the Estabul Kingdom during the war. To counter the sound wave magic that Estabul used, Roland created this magic. Although this was a simple magic to stop the air vibrations and preventing sound from travelling...

But when the voices vanished suddenly, the Nelpha soldiers entered a state of confusion.

It was an amazing tactic.

They had carried out lightning and thunder attack magic, letting them understand that they were in a dangerous situation, then created a world that had no sound at all, causing their terror to increase.

Not long later.

Sound returned to the world again...

“What, what happened!?”

“Oh no! Is it the enemy!? Is it the enemy!?”

Luke said in surprise,

“It’s undeniable that this is Roland’s magic... But what is going on. Unless... it’s the Taboo Breakers that are rescuing us? But the Taboo Breakers shouldn’t be rescuing the Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad...”

Hearing what Luke said, Milk started.

Yes, they couldn’t have rescued us. But if it is Ryner who said he did not recognize me...

But he... Ryner rescued me...

Ahhhhh! But I created an opportunity for him to escape with much difficulty. Even if the Nelpha soldiers capture us, there would be no problem...

Although she thought this, her face softened...

At this moment.

The Nelpha soldier in front of them collapsed, as if he were hit on the head by something.

He, he’s here!?

Ryner has come to save...us...

But! The one who appeared in front of them was that slightly pretty woman called Ferris, her blond hair glittering as she used her elegant sword skills to defeat the soldiers...

This woman seemed to be protecting Milk and the others, blocking the Nelpha soldiers...

“Ah!?”

Why would this person!? Why would she protect us!?

She was unable to understand, what was going on?

Un-unless, this woman, Ferris, wasn’t a bad person who was using Ryner...

But loved...

At this moment, Ryner finally ran over to Milk’s side lazily. Upon seeing him, Milk couldn’t help but shout,

“Ah! You idiot, Ryner! Where have you been to! I can’t believe this! You could

come quickly to rescue me! What if I had wet my pants!?”

The heart of a young girl...

She had done this to save Ryner with much difficulty...

What-what had Ryner and that woman been doing in the forest?

Milk felt like crying when she thought of this.

“Wu... I came here to save you, but you called me an idiot, it’s a little disappointing...”

There, there was no such matter...

“Any-anyway, untie the ropes quickly! This is an order! Even if I look like that, I still have the position of a captain...”

“I, I know that, be quiet for a moment. We distracted the soldiers’ attention with much difficulty. If you continue to shout, then this will be meaningless...”

At this moment, the emotionless woman standing away from them said. “It’s too late.”

“Ah?”

When Ryner looked back, the Nelpha soldiers had already regrouped...

They carried swords, axes, clubs and other various forms of weapons. The Nelpha soldiers charged forward,

“You!? You are companions, after all!? Roland spies! Die!”

Luke tried to explain frantically,

“I-I said this was a misunderstanding... Talking about which, why would the Taboo Breakers come and rescue us... What’s happening...”

As they spoke, the Nelpha soldiers had already reached them...

“This, this can’t be happening!? Wa, wa wa!”

Ryner was forced to dodge as he was unable to fight. But he lost his balance and was unable to block the enemy’s attacks...

He used that strange object in his hands to block the next blow.

It was a strange green, inorganic object.

It was like a dagger, but the hilt and the blade was undistinguishable and it was hard to determine if it was truly a weapon.

“...That... what... I should say, even if he uses that to fight, there would be no possibility of him winning...”

As Milk said that, Ryner was facing a barrage of blows. Even if it was him, he was unable to block them...

“Damn it... What should we do, Ferris... Wa!!”

At that moment.

An unbelievable scene unfolded in front of their eyes.

A blow from a pole struck Ryner's head and sent him flying.

Ryner's body soared through the air...

Then he landed on the ground, and stopped moving like a broken puppet.

Milk looked.

Ryner's head had been struck at a dangerous angle... and it could have been hit with a fatal amount of strength...

“Li-liar... you're lying, right...?”

It was unbelievable.

She had finally met him. But she had not passed on anything. She had not thanked him. And she hadn't told him 'I like you'... She hadn't told him anything...

Ryner was...

“No, nooooooooo!?! Ryner!?”

Milk cried in despair.

Following that, the beautiful woman, for unknown reasons, used a happy tone and said...

“Oh? Impressive, he's dead?”

She said something unbelievable.

Wha-what!? What was this woman saying! Ryner had been forcefully used by this woman.

Ryner, Ryner was...

But.

As if he were reacting to this woman's words, Ryner slowly got up, cradling his head,

"I say! Don't curse other people."

Saying thi...

Milk was shocked.

Liar... He had faced that, but was still able to stand up...? No, compared to that, did this woman know that Ryner was fine...?

Milk looked at Ferris.

Ferris stuck out her tongue and used a slightly disappointed tone to say,

"You're still living, that's great."

"... Why don't I hear a tinge of happiness in that?"

"You think too much. If you were killed by that kind of strike, then you should have died two thousand times after facing my sword."

"You thought that politely of me, huh."

"Yes. Jokes aside... But this situation is not good. Ryner. If you still want to protect these men and this woman that you abandoned, then we cannot fight this number of people. Think of something."

"Ah? What to do!?"

"That's simple. What are you holding now? The Hero's sword? Then the one who is holding it is a Hero, right? Then you should think of something to do."

"Your logic is twisted. Anyway, I haven't analyzed this object, how do I know how it works?"

"Then analyze it now."

“Where do I have the time in this situation—”

“I’ll back you up.”

What was this conversation.

Ferris took a step forward, fighting the soldiers as if she were protecting Ryner...

Milk looked at this scene, speechless.

What was the relationship between these two people...?

“This is too difficult... Even if I analyze it now, what is there to discover... Wa!?”

At that moment, Ferris’s sword lunged towards Ryner, then it returned to holding off the soldiers.

She said,

“If you say something like that again, I’ll make sure your body and head divorce.”

“Wuuu... Yes...”

Ryner frantically started to analyze the object. He followed Ferris’s orders and tried to analyze this dagger-like object.

He seriously studied it, examined it, analyzed it, studied...

Then he finally!

“I – don’t know!! Under this kind of urgent situation, how can I analyze it!!”

He simply gave up.

And he threw the dagger aside with an annoyed expression.

The dagger stabbed the ground...

In this moment.

Crrrrrreeeeeeeeaaaaa

Releasing a sharp sound, the dagger entered the ground, spinning quickly.

“What!?”

Milk couldn’t help but raise her voice upon seeing that.

Not long after, abnormal changes started happening.

Suddenly.

Crraaaaaaaacccccccckkkkkkkk!!

The earth started to shake vigorously.

“Ah? Ah? Ah? What is this, what is this?”

Luke said.

“What-what is going...”

Lach, Lear, Moe, even the Nelpha soldiers were shocked and troubled by this strange sudden events.

Only Ryner, who caused this to happen, remained calm...

What, what has Ryner done? What has Ryner been involved in?

Just as she wanted to ask this, Ferris asked,

“What have you done?”

But...

“Who knows?”

Ryner answered simply.

Then, things started to happen.

A large fire column appeared in the hole that the dagger had drilled.

No, it was not only fire. This column of fire had an enormous jaw, sharp teeth, red eyes...

This fire column had the structure of a dragon. This fire column opened its huge mouth,

Wuuuuuuuuuuuuaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhh!!

It let out a sound that definitely belonged to a monster.

At this moment,

“What, what is thaaat!?”

Milk cried.

This was a strange and unimaginable scene.

Or to be more accurate, a character that only appeared in storybooks had suddenly appeared in front of their eyes.

Death was right in front of them. This fire column gave a threatening feeling. Towards this, of course,

“Wa, it’s a monster!?”

“We, we will be killed~”

The Nelpha soldiers shouted and escaped...

But as for Milk and the rest who were tied up... Moe shouted, “Cap-caaaaptaaaaaaiinn what is thaaaat!?”

“I, I don’t know!?”

Lach continued,

“We’re done for! We’re definitely done for! Because we’re definitely done for! We can’t escaape!?”

Then Lear,

“.....Eh~”

Last was Luke,

“Any-anyway, everyone calm done! Use the gre-green worm method to escape from here quickly...”

Then, the dragon did this again,

Wuuuuuuuuuuuuaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhh!

Milk and the others froze in that moment...

“Yaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

They couldn’t help but scream...

Just like that.

About ten minutes passed...

Only the large dragon that had grown tired from crying, Milk and the rest who were on the ground and Ferris and Ryner were left in the area.

Ferris stood by the side of Milk and the others, and said to Ryner who was looking dazedly at the dragon,

“Amazing. Is that the legend of the Heroes?”

“No, no matter what, that definitely looks like a dragon... Although it is from the legend...”

“Mm-hmm. No matter what, we’re saved. You’ve done well. It’s enough. Keep that dangerous and meaningless dragon and we can continue.”

But Ryner turned to look at Ferris and said,

“...How to keep it?”

“...”

An irresponsible conversation.

At last, Milk witnessed an unbelievable scene.

Ryner and Ferris ignored the abnormal scene of the dragon growing from the ground... or to be more accurate, they seemed to be escaping from this situation that they had caused, ignoring Milk and the others as they left...

“But leaving the matter of the dagger being a Heroes’ Relic or not, the world actually has something like this, huh.”

“Of course, it’s just like what the sources said.”

At this moment, Milk shouted.

“Wa-wait, Ryner! Didn’t I tell you to help me untie these ropes!”

But her words were completely ignored.

Not only that woman, even Ryner did not turn back, but they continued to walk.

Milk couldn’t believe this, “T-this has to be a lie...? Why?”

Ryner and Ferris continued to walk,

“But, I didn’t really think that there would be something like this, so troublesome~ Are we still going to look for Heroes’ Relics next time? I don’t want to go~”

“Exactly. Being together with a pervert like you is dangerous for me.”

“No, it should be my head that is in more danger.”

This wasn’t the time to be cracking jokes!!

There was a dragon by their side? Or it should be said...

“A-anyway, what is this dragon!? Don’t leave me by something like this!!”

But the two still didn’t turn around...

Finally, their figures disappeared.

Milk only looked after them dazedly...

This was strange, really strange.

But according to this, she could guess that Ryner had met some bad things.

Because, wasn’t this strange. He had rescued them, but didn’t turn back to look...

What was going on?

Milk narrowed her eyes.

This was extremely odd. She had been saved by him. If it wasn’t for him, she wouldn’t be living now.

And that blond woman. She didn’t know what relationship that woman had with Ryner.

Although she did not understand, but this was trivial.

She was very certain that Ryner had met something troublesome.

Then...

This time, it's my turn to rescue Ryner!

She thought.

For this, I will be willing to sacrifice everything...

At this moment.

"Ah! My teeth hurt!? But the ropes have been bitten through!"

It was Lach's voice. Then,

"Good work, Lach. Now I'll help everyone to untie their ropes."

The voices sounded from behind her...

But Milk didn't turn around...

Then Moe said,

"Great! The last one is Captain Milk!"

He said... but...

At this moment, Luke...

"... That... Captain Milk?"

"..."

But Milk... still didn't turn around.

Because she would give up everything, yes, she had told herself this. That meant, she would have to betray them, betray her subordinates.

I don't have the right to continue to be their leader...

At this moment, Luke and the rest fell silent.

"..."

Then, Luke said again,

"Captain Milk. That, what we said earlier, do you still remember?"

Suddenly saying something like that...

What they had said earlier? What had Luke said earlier? From earlier, her mind had been filled with Ryner, she completely couldn't remember what Luke had said...

"What, do you know I was once in Major Miller's team?"

"What... are you saying..."

Luke interrupted Milk and continued in his gentle tone.

"Anyway, I was once Major Miller's subordinate. I wanted to tell you about the Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad when Major Miller was still the captain and when I was still a newbie..."

Hearing this, Milk couldn't stop herself from turning back, revealing a surprised expression and looking at Luke's face.

What was Luke trying to say?

But Luke smiled that gentle smile,

"This was something that happened when Miller's Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad was sent to the Runa Empire. I wouldn't mention the details but the Taboo Breakers were a family of four who had escaped from Roland... Parents and two adopted children from an adoption facility. Then Roland sent the order to capture them and it was an order to kill them too. Not only the parents, but the two children too..."

Milk frowned.

Yes, what Milk and the others were doing was this kind of work. Even if the other party had a reason, they still had to follow the orders and carry out the punishment. No, there were no Taboo Breakers that had no reason to be punished.

And this was what Miller had said.

"I'm asking you this again. Why do you want to know the history of the Taboo Breaker? What if you feel sympathy for that Taboo Breaker's history? Would you be sympathetic to him and not kill him? Our duty is that kind of duty. The dirty things that people do not want to do. But, there must be someone..."

It was a job that had to be done...

Miller had said that.

So what Luke had said, that family had, of course...

Luke continued.

“We caught up to the targets quickly. The parents initially resisted and put up a fight... But we caught them successfully... then the parents desperately and tearfully begged for us to let them go. No, we could do anything to their lives. But, only the kids... Yes, that was what they had said... and like what Captain Milk knows, Major Miller...”

As he reached there, Milk turned her face away.

She didn't want to hear the ending.

For the sake of other people's lives, what Miller had done was right. And he had mentally prepared himself for this job.

But, there wasn't any need for him to tell me this.

Luke continued calmly.

“Even if this didn't happen, from the situation then, there was no other way to save them. And they themselves understood that. But when they heard that the children would be killed too, they were forced to escape... This was the family's reason for escaping Roland...” For the sake of protecting the children...

That was the reason. This reason should be justifiable. Under those kind of circumstances, anyone would want to escape too. And nobody could be blamed...

Nobody could be blamed...

Luke continued.

“They told us that they loved their sons. Even though they weren't their biological sons, but they truly loved these adopted sons that had spent the last five years with them. They couldn't let the children be killed because of what they had done. So they had tried to protect them, no matter what. Please save these two children... But...”

He paused, “But... Major Miller... killed the children first.”

“...”

Milk was speechless.

Luke continued.

“After that, he punished the parents and brought them back to Roland. Eventually, they were given the death sentence... and then the mission ended. After that, there was another mission... This is the job of the Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad. Those who are unable to do these are the people that the Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad do not need.”

“...Yes.”

Milk nodded her head honestly.

She had already understood what Luke wanted to say. Luke had understood.

Her desire to save Ryner...

The fact that I am already unable to be their companion...

“I...”

Milk said in a whisper.

“I will leave the Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad...”

But Luke suddenly interrupted what Milk was about to say,

“Ah, as a side note, Captain Milk. The names of the two children that Major Miller killed... Coincidentally, they were called Moe and Lach... What do you think of that?”

Milk couldn't help herself but reply in a dazed tone, “Ah?”

Raising her head, she found Luke, Lach, Lear and Moe smiling at her for some unknown reason...

“Ah? Ah? That, how can that...”

Towards this, Luke said,

“This is exactly what happened. Major Miller didn't kill the children. No, he couldn't bear to kill them. Don't be taken in by how he said that so seriously. He

himself couldn't kill them."

He frowned,

"But, you see... Looking at the situation then, the parents... could not be saved... Even then, he didn't kill the children. At that time—the reign of the previous king, there was the probability of being killed even though it was treason... Ignoring that insane era Roland was in... Major Miller didn't kill them but he secretly brought them back to Roland and hired them as his own personnel..."

"But, but but, then..."

Milk was unable to say anything. Luke continued,

"I should also mention that I could have accused Major Miller for treason but in the end, I still followed him. My companions also decided on the same course of action. No, we didn't only follow him. We thought that Major Miller's decision was always right. We put our complete trust in Major Miller's personality and decisions, so we didn't say anything and followed his decision. I think that should be how a squad should be like. Then..."

Luke looked at Milk meaningfully. Lear, who had always maintained a cool and composed expression smiled,

"I trust Captain Milk."

Then Moe and Lach,

"Yeah, me too!"

"Me too."

Last was Luke, he revealed a slightly serious expression that he seldom had,

"Captain Milk. When Major Miller first ordered us to become your personnel, we were a little reluctant. We were Major Miller's personnel, we were unable to work for other leaders."

"Really?"

Milk asked. Luke nodded with a warm expression,

"But after seeing you and talking with you, our views changed. We decided to

follow you. From that moment on, we decided to become your family. We think that a squad should be like that. We like you, so we became your subordinates. Because we like to be with you. So we also wish that you will be able to regain what you lost and we wish that you will be happy. We don't fight for the country. We fight for its people. So that we will be able to save our important people..."

Saying this, he looked at Milk...

Milk didn't say anything.

Luke continued,

"So, Captain, as long as you think it is right, then do it. We will follow you, like how we trusted Major Miller and followed him. You don't have to feel troubled over this. If you do something wrong, we will correct you. No matter what happens, we will always be your companions. So you don't have to feel troubled over what kind of decisions you should make. No matter what happens, you will always be our leader... and then..."

He laughed in embarrassment,

"Everyone can eat together cheerfully and noisily. Because that is family."

Saying it like this...

"Family..."

Milk was unable to move.

This was the first time it was said like that.

Family... family...

She had never thought she would desire.... This word. She never had any family... She didn't even know what exactly it was like...

But the people in front of her...

Family...?

"Family..."

She didn't know why she was unable to say it.

She didn't know what it was and she had never given it much thought. So why would she feel so touched...?

Her vision slowly blurred and disappeared.

Luke frantically ran over, shocked by her tears and patted her head as if comforting her...

Lach and Moe desperately joked about, wanting to make her laugh...

Lear only looked on, as if protecting her and smiling...

She didn't know that there was such an existence in the world.

She had never known that Man was not lonely.

When had this appeared? When had the world become so warm...?

I...

Am not alone.

And I can still rescue Ryner.

It was a happiness that was indescribable.

It wasn't tears of sadness that leaked out from her eyes... Milk smiled. She smiled brightly.

After that, Luke suddenly told Milk who was smiling brightly,

"Ah, then, although we said this earlier... Since the problem has been resolved, shall we enter the next stage of our journey?"

"Next stage?"

She asked Luke, not understanding. No, it wasn't only him, even Lach, Lear and Moe pointed to the side at the same time...

In a moment.

Milk understood.

Her mind had been so filled with thoughts of Ryner that she had completely

forgotten...

She looked to her side. That enormous dragon had stopped moving and was at the place where it had grown from...

Towards this,

“Au...”

Although it was already too late, but Milk said softly.

“I, I understand. Everyone, with-withdraw quickly.”

“Yes!”

Although it was too late, the voices of Luke and the others were soft...

Lach and Moe carried Milk, who was still tied up,

“Then, let’s escape quickly!”

“Yes!”

Putting aside their thoughts, Milk’s team quickly fled the area.

As to the dragon, it was as if it wasn’t grown there and it remained unresponsive...

Chapter 3: Each of them with their own melancholy

At this moment, in another place.

There was the first time ever since Sion became the king of Roland that there was such an uproar.

Estabul had rebelled.

And this revolution had gathered the responses from a large number of Estabul soldiers and a large force was formed.

This reality had not only caused the citizens of Roland, but even the nobles to become frantic...

This was the dignified palace. The previous owner of the palace had made a throne and a meaninglessly large palace supported by stone columns to show off the majesty and glory of it.

In the past, no one dared to oppose the king who sat on this throne.

No, even if anyone dared to raise their opinion, that would be the death sentence...

Death penalty for all who dared to ruin the king's mood.

This country was like that.

Every day, this kind of country would be continuously corrupted...

But now...

Before the throne that Sion sat on were many nobles and military personnel.

As Sion's confidants, Claugh, Calne and Froaude had already joined Count Nuble and his royalist faction.

And... the anti-royalist faction, Duke Stearead with his group.

Looking at the people before the throne, Sion smiled lightly.

He said softly,

“...This really is very clear...”

The groups, the royalist faction and the anti-royalist faction had separated neatly to both sides.

Some spies from the anti-royalist faction were mixed in with the royalist faction, but this was the same for the other side as well.

They were only symbols that there were some people in the anti-royalist faction who were clearly very rude.

And this was the evidence that Sion's power was unable to influence the nobles.

Standing on Sion's side were mostly the military personnel and the nobles who were working with him...

And this was also to do with politics...

The military people must have thought that if they followed Sion, then they would be able to be promoted.

Until the end, there were only a few who truly meant well for the country.

“...But, this is also to be expected...”

The first to speak was the anti-royalist faction. A forty year old man with bulging eyes, Count Cleaude said,

“Your Majesty, how are you going to take responsibility for what happened? The liberated people in Estabul have begun to rebel...”

At this moment, a tall elderly knight shouted,

“Lord Cleaude, how dare you treat His Majesty with such disrespect!!”

It was Count Nuble. He glared at Cleaude with a hard look.

Hearing this, Cleaude retreated slightly, turning his head as if wanting to ask someone behind him for instructions.

Then he regained his confidence,

“Ha! Lord Nuble, I am only speaking the truth. By allowing the degrading scum of Estabul to rebel, isn’t this the best evidence that we have that the king’s power is still not strong?”

“You! Don’t think your arrogant attitude will be forgiven!”

Hearing them talk, Sion revealed a bitter smile. Then he murmured softly to himself...

“Of course it’ll be forgiven...”

This was the situation that Sion was in. Although he sat on the throne, but he had no power to control the nobles. Even if the nobles used that sort of attitude, he had to forgive them.

Not only that...

Sion narrowed his eyes and stared behind Cleaude.

Duke Stearead.

Cleaude was begging for Stearead’s opinion. The one with the most power in this situation is not me, but Stearead.

He was able to exhaust every means, threats, bribery to persuade the nobles... A man who lived in Roland’s darkness. The confidant of the previous king.

A person who had the capability.

After the previous king lost his power, he didn’t lose his place but continued to seat in the precious position of being the head of the nobles, like he had done in the past.

Sion had sent several spies to Stearead’s place, but they had not caught any leads. Not only that, there were some spies who had never returned since then. Besides that, the territory that Stearead was in charge of was always prosperous and the people’s opinion of him was very good.

Sion looked at this man in his vision.

He was already in his late fifties, his spine was straight and he had a seemingly

warm expression.

But this man was definitely the leader of the nobles here...

And he could feel a presence behind that man that would never appear on the stage...

Sion shook his head. This was not the time to be thinking about this. The day when these nobles would clash would be coming soon...

What was most important now was Estabul.

The Estabul Revolution.

“...”

Sion looked at the man who had an expression that said he had nothing to do with this, as he watched Nuble and Cleaude argue.

The culprit who started the Estabul Revolution.

The man who had suggested to stir a rebellion and kill all of the potentially dangerous candidates in Estabul smiled faintly.

Cleaude said,

“Arrogant? I am only speaking the truth. His Majesty pampers the peasants too much. Those foolish people cannot even survive without our guidance, if we pamper them slightly, they’ll immediately become proud! Estabul is the same! Because His Majesty always reveals an overly-gentle attitude, so it caused this kind of situation to happen!”

Nuble’s face was red.

But this was the end of it,

“Be quiet!!”

A roar sounded.

It was a penetrating and forceful voice.

The nobles who had been quarrelling, fell silent as if they had agreed upon it. Then they looked towards the owner of the voice.

It was Stearead.

Claugh, who was standing the nearest to Sion, muttered sarcastically,

“Eh... the important man has finally come...”

Stearead looked at the nobles surrounding him, then he looked at Sion and said with a steady voice,

“My apologies, Your Majesty. Young people talk too passionately... but they are thinking for our country. We feel rather lost because of the rebellion in Estabul.”

Thinking of our country? He actually said this, what a thick-skinned man.

Sion laughed coldly inside his mind, but he nodded his head on the outside,

“I understand. Duke Stearead and the nobles gathered here have always thought for the country and have contributed much to the country. To this, I feel grateful to everyone.”

“You’re over-praising us...”

Stearead bowed his head deeply.

Although Nuble was staring at him...

This was to be expected. Those words meant that only Nuble was to be ashamed of himself in this situation.

But he could only shrug and hint at him to forgive him. They could not afford to debate with Stearead now. If they did so, then they would truly gain the animosity from the anti-royalist faction...

But now was not the time. It was not the time to attack back.

The rebellion in Estabul.

This is our script...

Then, we have to proceed according to our script.

Stearead said,

“Then, how does Your Majesty plan to deal with the rebellion in Estabul? Although they are a defeated country, but they have managed to gain so much power... the nobles are terrifying. If possible, we hope that you will be able to

deal with it quickly...”

Saying this, he smiled slyly.

The news of the rebellion in Estabul was two days’ old. In only two days, it was impossible for him to deal with this rebellion.

That was the expression on his face.

Because the instigator of this rebellion and its base ground were unknown.

But Sion smiled,

“Of course, Duke Stearead, we have already made arrangements. No, that they would rebel around this period was within our expectations. So please relax.”

As soon as he finished speaking, the palace was filled with noise.

Stearead seemed to be slightly surprised, seeming to be thinking about something. No, Clough, Calne, Nuble and the people in the royalist faction were also surprised...

Clough asked,

“You have already expected that a rebellion would happen?”

Sion nodded, but his eyes didn’t move from Stearead.

“We have already investigated the background of the instigator thoroughly. It is the stubborn daughter of the previous king who refused have an audience with me, Luci Ehn’s only daughter, Princess Noa Ehn. The Estabul nobles and the soldiers who follow them have gathered around her.”

Stearead’s expression became slightly embarrassed,

“I didn’t think that you would investigate so...”

His mutter didn’t escape Sion’s ears.

“That’s right. We’ve already investigated all the details of this. So, you and the nobles who are present here today, please guide the people and feel at ease. I’m not as foolish as you might think...”

That’s right, I’m not so foolish that I will be able to forgive your actions every

time...

Sion stared at Stearead and the nobles behind him forcefully.

The nobles moved their eyes away in fear, bowing their heads...

Only Stearead didn't evade Sion's eyes and smiled...

"How dependable. As long as Your Majesty is here, this country can exist as a country..."

Sion ignored him and continued,

"Then, about the investigation in Estabul, please come forward and deliver your report, Major Miran Froaude."

Froaude nodded and stood forward.

He was silent for a moment, waiting for the nobles' attention to settle on him, then he spoke in a cold voice, as if his emotions had died, a voice like the devil's.

"The situation is not good. According to the information I have, the number of soldiers gathered within these few days number.....three thousand. And the numbers are increasing. If we leave them like this, the numbers will increase to five thousand sooner or later."

The nobles' faces changed completely.

"Five-five thousand!?"

"This cannot be... this, doesn't this mean... half of the Estabul soldiers of the past have participated in this rebellion..."

Froaude did not take note of these and continued calmly...

"The battle is predicted to take place in the Estabul territory... There could be some damage to Roland's territories. And these damages are suppressed in the smallest situation predicted. On Roland's side, the territory most likely to have a war... is Stearead-sama's territory..."

"What!? I will never allow this..."

Stearead shouted, but without waiting for him to finish, Froaude interrupted him calmly,

“Although I feel sorry for Stearead-sama, but from the enemy’s movements and the geographical map, this is the necessary measure that we have to take in order to reduce the damage. I thought that if it was Stearead-sama who thought of the country, he would agree immediately, wouldn’t he?”

“Damn...damnit...”

But he didn’t not say anything else.

Froaude checked him and continued,

“Aside from Stearead-sama’s territory, there are Nuble-sama’s territory, Parl-sama’s territory and Ishula-sama’s territory... these territories may be involved in the war. So in this period of time, we will be requesting the nobles to leave their lands temporarily and evacuate to the city. As such, please rest assured. The military and I will help you to guard your territories...” Hearing this, Sion smiled bitterly. The way how Froaude had spoken about the following territories, barring Nuble, was as if deliberate and almost all of them were the territories of the anti-royalist faction.

Towards this, Cleaude, Ishula and Nuble changed their expressions.

“Please, please wait. You mean that you want us to leave our lands and let you trample on our lands!?”

“This, this cannot be forgiven! I reject...”

But Froaude used his dark eyes to stare at the nobles.

“Cannot be forgiven? What do you mean? Is there any problem with me visiting your territories when you are not present? Or do you mean that there is something there that is inconvenient for my eyes?”

“Don’t, don’t say such foolish things! There aren’t anything of the sort! But, but...”

At this moment, the three nobles looked pleadingly at Stearead who was standing by their side, Stearead continued,

“Let it go, calm down Lord Cleaude. I understand what you want to say.”

As he said that he turned to look at Froaude,

“Major Miran Froaude. Please understand their feelings. As a noble-born, you should understand, right? We nobles love our land very much and we love our people. We feel sad knowing that our lands are going to be bombarded by the flames of war. How can we leave our lands like that?”

Froaude narrowed his eyes and replied,

“I see. Then, you may remain on your lands. There are only five thousand Estabul soldiers... our military can surely take care of them.”

Hearing this, Sion had some difficulty trying to suppress his laughter. To the soldiers who would be sent to another land, five thousand was not an easy number to hold back.

If they stayed within their territories, they might die...

The nobles turned pale.

“Ac-actually, I’m not so adamant in staying on my own lands...”

But Stearead raised a hand to stop him from continuing.

“Major Froaude. Can’t you think of any other way... I mean, is there any other to prevent the war from reaching Roland? Isn’t this the time to display our military power?”

“Oh. You mean to say, is it possible to squash the rebellion within Estabul itself?”

“Yes. There isn’t any need to involve the people of Roland, is there?”

“But Estabul is currently the territory of Roland, they are also the people of Roland, aren’t they?”

“Do you really think so? Those people of the defeated country...”

Froaude interrupted Stearead,

“About what you said, Duke-sama, this kind of thinking will obstruct Roland’s development.”

As soon as he spoke, Stearead’s calm eyes turned sharp and harsh,

“Major Froaude. Don’t you think your words are a little too much? What do you take me as...”

But Froaude interrupted him again and bowed his head,

“I apologize. I’ll receive your punishment sincerely. But what is most important now is how to deal with the problem in Estabul. Just in the span of time we’re using to talk, the power in Estabul is continuing to expand. I would recommend negotiation as a good method for the direction we will be taking...”

He looked at Sion as he said this. But Sion shook his head,

“No, if we do that that would mean that we are allowing them to rebel. Estabul will declare themselves independent of Roland, and the war will still come.”

Froaude nodded,

“Then let us repress them. I will take an army to Estabul...”

They had decided this from the beginning, Froaude would command the army and kill all the soldier and nobles of Estabul...

But Sion shook his head.

“No, this matter will be handed to Major-General Claugh Klom. This repression of the Estabul Rebellion will be led by him.”

Hearing this, Froaude turned to look at Sion, his expression was like usual, dark and icy, but Sion knew what he wanted to say.

This was different from what they had agreed on...

According to Froaude’s script...

Froaude would negotiate with him to reveal all of the connections in the Estabul Rebellion and defeat the Estabul nobles. Then they would let the fires of war to spread to Roland and let the lands of the anti-royalist faction to suffer... it was supposed to be like that.

But.

Froaude maintained an icy voice,

“Your Majesty, this matter...”

Sion interrupted him,

“Claugh, can you do it?”

Claugh smiled coldly at Froaude,

“Leave it to me.”

He raised his hand to his chest and answer nobly.

Sion continued,

“Froaude will be in charge of transmitting the information. Use your network to help Claugh.”

Hearing this, Claugh couldn't help but say,

“Ah? I don't agree with this person helping me...”

“This is an order, Claugh. Froaude too, is this understood?”

Froaude smiled faintly,

“...I understand. That's fine, leave it to me.” He replied using his emotionless voice.

Sion confirmed this,

“Then, the repression of the rebellion in Estabul will be left to Major-General Claugh Klom to command. This topic is ended. For those who aren't affected, please rest assured and return to your positions. Then this is decided.”

He said in a bright voice.

No one dared to raise their opinion.

The nobles left the palace.

There were some who was dissatisfied. There were others who were smiling in satisfaction. There were some who were happy because they would not be involved in the war.

The nobles left, but only Stearead did not leave.

He stayed among the group of people as if nothing were wrong and looked at the only corner in the palace that seemed to be in perpetual darkness.

The place where Miran Froaude was.

Froaude was now standing at a distance away from the royalist faction.

That was to be expected. From the situation just now, Froaude's suggestion had been rejected by the king.

The Estabul rebellion.

Was it Froaude who had deliberately stirred the fires of the rebellion?

That was Stearead's theory. If that wasn't the case, then that young king couldn't remain so calm after the rebellion started. Froaude decided to suppress this rebellion and gain the expected results and be outstanding. Wasn't this what Froaude had planned?

"..."

He was a dangerous man.

Stearead thought.

He was a manipulator who had a sharp mind and who could plot to kill many people, a ruthless man. He was a man who no one would want to go against. Or better said, he was a person who no one would want to be the enemy of.

Stearead carried a warm smile as he walked against the flow of the crowd and approached Froaude.

Yes, there was no need to make him the enemy. They were the same kind of people.

This was the time to approach him.

This was a good opportunity to make him join our side, since the king has rejected his opinion...

"Greetings, Major Froaude."

Froaude turned around,

".....Duke-sama. Please forgive me for being so rude..."

But Stearead carried the same warm and helpful expression as he raised his hand,

“No, no, don’t mind that. You said that because you were concerned for the country. I always hear about you. Your father, Marquis Froaude must be proud.”

Froaude’s expression did not change.



“.....I feel honoured to be receiving your praise.”

Father...

What he meant to Froaude... Stearead knew that very well.

He was an orphan who had been brought into the Froaude family so that their influence in the military could be enhanced. He had heard that Miran Froaude was extremely loyal to Marquis Froaude and had done anything and everything so that he could be outstanding...

Stearead said.

“You should be very clear that I have close ties with your father, Marquis Froaude. I’ve always wanted to establish good ties with you.”

“That’s true. Actually, I wanted to have an opportunity to have a good talk with Duke Stearead-sama.”

“I see. Yes, that’s right. You also thought of this, eh? Although I am phrasing it this way... but I think both of us are the same kind of people.”

Stearead tried to probe deeper. The reply was,

“...It seems to be so. Perhaps the Duke and I are the same kind of people...”

He had guessed right. The other party wants to approach me. I wasn’t wrong...

Stearead smiled, satisfied,

“Isn’t that right. You can’t feel anything from that young king, can you?”

Froaude seemed to think deeply as he lowered his eyes, then,

“Yes. It’s a pity that my opinions weren’t received by him. But this is only my impression? He does not move according to what is most beneficial, honestly speaking that is a bit difficult for me.”

This was a sentence that determined everything.

He had caught him.

Stearead thought.

Even if it was an orphan, it would always be like father like son. He was like

Marquis Froaude. As long as he displayed charming conditions, he would easily run over to this side. As long as it was for his own benefit, he would not hesitate to sacrifice others.

Stearead happily said,

“Is it so, you thought of this as well?”

“That is my opinion.”

“Then, what about it? Which side do you think is right?”

Froaude tilted his head,

“What do you mean?”

But Stearead smiled,

“Do you need to ask? Us and the king, which side do you follow?”

“.....I still don’t understand your meaning.”

“...Heh heh. You’re very careful. And talented. You want me to talk about the conditions, right? It’s alright, who do you think I am? I will give you the payment that you wish for. Talented people like you are quite rare. You can even be my right arm man.”

He had already said so much.

And this was from the bottom of his heart.

The nobles around him were all idiots, they were always clouded by their desires and they always thought about the present.

He needed a person who could consider the future and discuss with him.

And that person was right in front of him...

But..

Froaude said,

“You seem to be like the other nobles, your brains aren’t very nimble.”

Saying that...

“What... what are you saying...”

But Stearead's words were stopped.

Froaude's expression suddenly changed...

Like a blood smear in the darkness, his red lips opened slightly...

"What I said earlier, have you forgotten about it? My beloved king is very gentle to his enemies. He is always thinking of ways to save the foolish nobles. If it were me, I would immediately kill them, unlike that humble person who would continue to let them live. That is why I will destroy those nobles who creep on the ground and I will always follow His Majesty."

In that moment, Froaude emanated a killing intention that even Stearead, who wasn't a military person, could feel.

He, he was about to be killed!?

Although he thought of this, but his feet could not move. It was as if he were paralysed, unable to move...

"What, what are you..."

Froaude didn't reply, he only smiled. But Stearead could hear a voice.

A devil's laughter.

If he moved, he would be killed. If he talked, he would be killed. If he resisted, he would be killed.

Stearead regretted it.

He was wrong. He was so wrong that it was ridiculous. He wasn't even human.

What he was... that voice was by him.

This person was... a real... devil...

Froaude used a calm voice to continue.

"Give me the payment that I wish for? You can't do that. What I wish for... can be only accomplished by Sion Astal-sama. Sion Astal-sama who is the real king can fulfill my wish to have a world where the weak and strong can survive. It is only a wish that the ruler of the Menoris Continent can fulfill."

Hearing this, Stearead was shocked.

Men-Menoris Continent... this-this man, what was he saying... unless, he wanted this world to be filled with war...?

“Then let me ask you. Which side will you follow? Will you, who hasn’t revealed his true identity as the power behind the scenes and... my king... For the sake of your life, I would advise you to make your decision quickly. Before the start of the repression of the Estabul rebellion...”

As he said this, Froaude suddenly smiled coldly. It wasn’t that ghostly smile, but it was a cold, emotionless smile...

At the same time, Stearead’s paralysis was removed.

He would move, but the cold sweat on his body made him feel weak. It was a weak feeling that was almost intolerable and made kneeling down seem acceptable.

Seeing this, Froaude said,

“I apologize for overstepping my boundaries. I’m very grateful for your advice. Then, I’ll retreat first.”

Saying this, he returned to the area where the royalists were...

Looking after him dazedly, Stearead completely understood that he had jumped into the spider web of his opponent. Froaude had deliberately left the royalists so that he would seem to be approachable...

He thought about what Froaude had said.

“For the sake of your life... before the repression of the Estabul rebellion...”

What did that mean. It seemed as if he needed to think carefully over this...

Stearead thought.

This was completely different from the Roland palace, it was a little dirty. The only thing redeeming about this old castle was that it was slightly spacious.

Ancient City... although it was called that, but it wasn’t so big. It was one of the blockhouses that had been constructed when Estabul had first prepared for

war with Roland...

She was in a room of that Ancient City.

Noa Ehn.

The princess of the destroyed Estabul Kingdom.

And the only surviving heir to the throne.

Noa used her clear voice to say,

“How is it? Where is my father now?”

She raised her head, her black, or to be more accurate, dark green hair swayed slightly. She had strong, determined green eyes. Her gaze made one feel as if she were not seventeen years old, giving out a strong presence.

That mesmerizing beauty was inherited from her mother, who was the top beauty in Estabul.

It added a stern beauty to her mother's beautiful looks.

This was because they were in a difficult situation... and because there were no other heirs to the throne except for her in Estabul, so she had to learn about the politics of her country even though she was a woman...

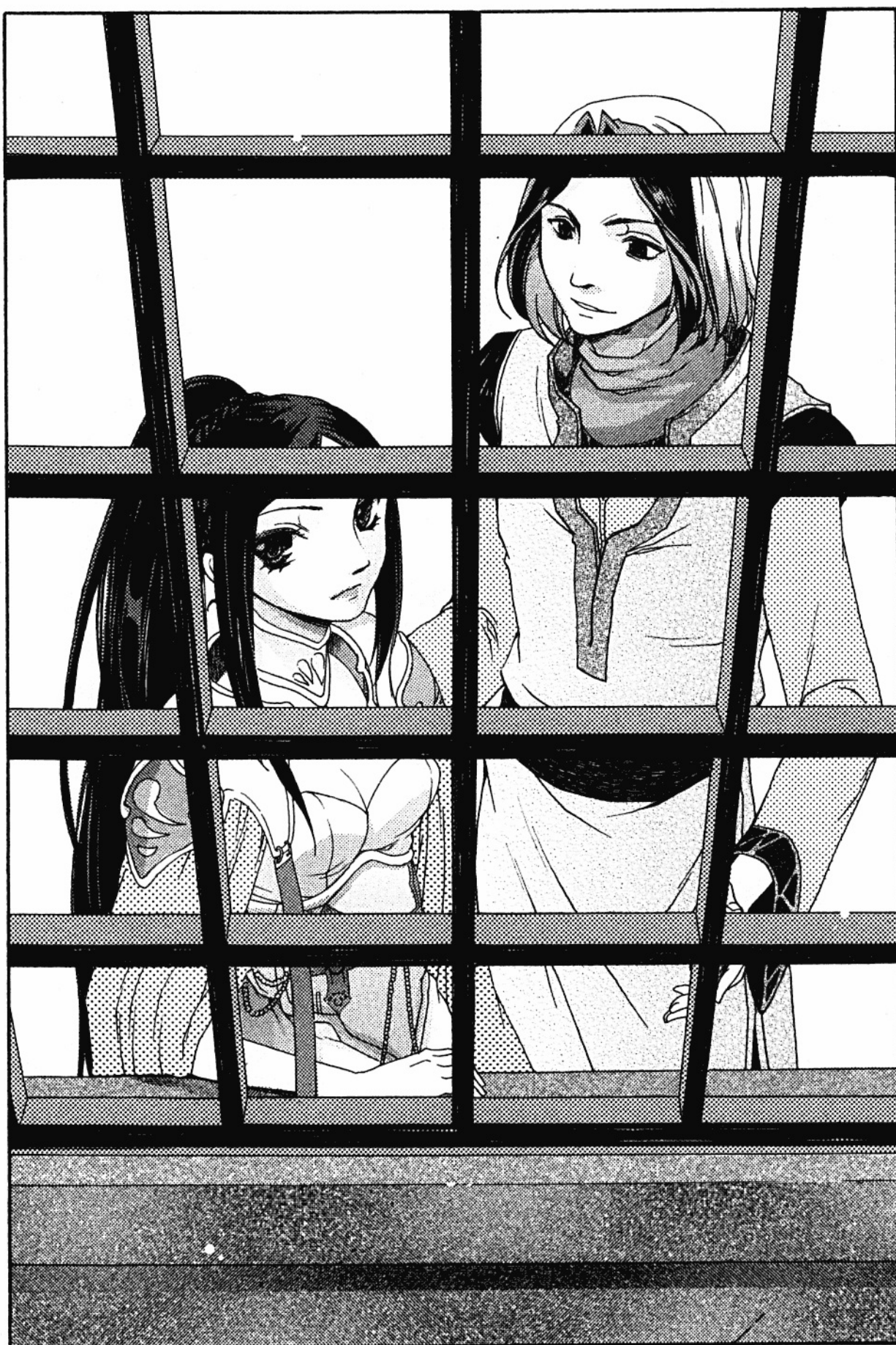
But in the end, Noa would become queen...

Towards her question, her most trusted person answered.

“His Majesty is now a noble of Roland, he lives near the interior of the enemy's country. If there is a chance, he will join us.”

Towards this answer, Noa smiled,

“You want to...lie to me? Salawell...”



The man called Salawell shrugged in reply.

This more-or-less twenty-five year old man was one of the first nobles that Noa knew. He graduated as the top talented scholar from the Royal College. And he was from the famous Sael family.

He was her mentor in all matters of the royal matters and her most trusted person.

Noa asked Salawell again.

“Then, according to your opinion, what is the situation now?”

“... My opinion? Yes. Your father has done an exchange with the position that Roland gave him and the safety they provide, and simply betrayed his country. Is it fine if I say it like that? But I don't think there is any need to mind your father...”

Noa nodded,

“I don't... mind. I didn't spend much time with Father. Ever since my mother died, he has been very busy without any thought to his age... but the people of Estabul will be more happy if Father were the head of the rebellion forces and not a woman like me.”

Salawell bowed his head,

“I didn't think that Your Highness Noa would think so deeply... but the nobles and the people, everyone looks up to you. Your abilities... have already fulfilled what is required as a king, and the people on the roads are...”

But Noa laughed bitterly,

“Those were the rumors that you spread, weren't they?”

Salawell looked as if he had done nothing wrong,

“If it wasn't the truth, even if I tried hard enough, it would be hard for it to spread. Estabul is waiting in anticipation for its real king.”

“...Let's put this aside...”

Noa only laughed at this.

This smile was a tired smile. This could be the last time that they would have such a leisurely exchange...

Thinking about this, Noa's expression became determined.

Salawell noticed this and said with a warm voice,

"Are you scared? Your Highness..."

"Scared?"

Towards this, Noa looked at Salawell, then closed her eyes.

"Of course... I am scared. For everyone... as the leader of the nobles who are rebelling... what do we do if we are unable to defeat Roland?"

But Salawell used a sincere tone,

"We will win. We won't lose to Roland who used ruthless and cruel methods to invade Estabul."

"Cruel and ruthless? But isn't Roland governing the people of Estabul fairly. Is there really a need for war?"

"Of course. We have to retrieve Estabul from Roland's hands..."

But Noa interrupted Salawell,

"Salawell. I don't think it is important about the country. A country that has the name Estabul can exist in this world, even if it doesn't exist, it doesn't matter, what is meaningful about it? Compared to that, what is important is the people. Can the people be happy? With this war, will this allow the people to be happier than they are now? Is this war necessary? Will this be a reckless venture that will only result in the flowing of blood?"

Noa opened her eyes and looked at Salawell.

"I want the people to live happily, that is enough. Weren't you the one who taught me this? Salawell."

Hearing this, Salawell seemed to think for a moment,

"Your thinking is correct. But even so, Your Highness, this war is necessary."

"..."

“We are still strong now, so Roland still treats us fairly. And they respect the people of Estabul. But what about the days after this? After long as time passes and Estabul’s power will be absorbed by Roland? Perhaps Roland will start to terrorise the people of Estabul. They will treat the people of Estabul differently. If they are unfair, then we may become slaves. Countries like this, people like this are like that. They always need to create something that is lower than themselves. The nobles created the commoners, the commoners created the slaves. And the criticism of the nobles of Roland are not good. We will become like that eventually. Then, while we still have the strength, we have to move. If we are nobles who wish for the best for the people...”

“ ... ”

Noa fell silent after listening to what Salawell said. She was very clear about the importance of the key that she was holding.

The important key to the people surrounding her...

“...Salawell... Since you say so, then it must be like that. Just like what happened in the past... I gave the order that caused many people, soldiers and fellow kinsmen to die...”

“If it is for you, then we will give our lives willingly.”

It was a hated sentence.

She didn’t want to become the monarch.

Becoming a king meant that you would have to weigh the people’s lives, for the sake of saving what was more important, the duty to abandon the other side. Yes, it was like what she had learnt from Salawell.

But even so, she had to do it. For the sake of saving the people of Estabul...

She stood up.

Salawell opened the door of the room...

The door opened slowly but it was opened.

On the other side of the door, there were many nobles and military people who wished for Noa to be king...

Noa looked in that distant direction...

Even though she couldn't see it now... but she saw people and soldiers being dragged into the fires of war...

She said.

"Raise the soldiers. Encourage them to be brave. To save the people. For the sake of reinstating the Estabul Kingdom. Justice is on our side. This is a war of victory. Are there any people who believe in me and who are willing to follow me?"

The room was filled with approving cries.

Noa lowered her eyes, then raised her head again.

This time, her eyes were no longer cloudy with indecision, but they were filled with determination.

That poise, was like a war goddess.

As if looking through everything, her eyes were firm.

She breathed and said.

"Then I officially announce that we will attack Roland from today onwards."

The war began like this...

In the empty palace of Roland, Sion sat on the throne in a daze.

He stared at the ceiling where no one would notice an ornament of a beautiful angel with wings who was securely placed and a weapon that was aimed at a demon.

He only looked on steadily.

Then,

"...People will...die..."

He said to himself.

Many people would die. That was unquestionable.

This was war. He had avoided the war with Estabul initially with much difficulty...

He had paid with the emotional wounds inflicted on Ryner and Kiefer... and Fahle, Toni, Tyle and the lives of many others as a price, he had escaped the war with Estabul with much difficulty...

But in the end, it was still the same.

“...Froaude that man...”

Saying that, Sion shook his head.

No.

It wasn't like that. It was because he himself thought that the war was necessary, so he didn't stop Froaude, wasn't that so? And he had given himself an excuse, sending Claugh and not sending Froaude to repress the rebellion.

Of course, he understood.

The path he was walking on was like that.

But... this repression of the rebellion could not be handed to Froaude to be taken care of. At least, even though there would only be a small number of people who could be saved, he wanted to save them.

This wasn't being a hypocrite.

Froaude had his own ways of doing things.

Claugh had his own ways of doing things.

Both of their ways in doing things were needed...

Then,

“...I have my own way of doing things... that's right...”

But.

Even though this was so, people would die.

And it wouldn't be one or two.

Because of his orders, people would die.

He had to make this choice.

Left or right, which was more important?

Which lives on either side were more important?

Claugh had already gone ahead with the army to repress the Estabul rebellion.

“I am going to let... Claugh... kill people...”

Sion closed his eyes.

The ending for this was already...

When he opened his eyes again...

“Wa!?”

Sion couldn't help but cry out.

A scene had suddenly appeared.

Under the demon and angel ornaments on the ceiling, Sion looked at the female who had suddenly appeared without any presence... to be more accurate, it was a girl... Although this happened every time, but Sion would be shocked every time.



No matter what, this palace was guarded by many soldiers, don't even say a girl, even a rat would have been unable to enter.

But this girl didn't seem to care about the soldiers, she was stuck to the ceiling and her beautiful features were creased with an uneasy look.

"Ne ne ne, that that, Iris has always, always been at that pillar and from your chair, and then I came to the ceiling, I've been peeking at you, is Sion Onii-san crying? Is he crying?"

Beautiful golden hair, a lacy skirt and a double strapped bag on her bag. The beautiful girl who was dressed oddly asked.

Hearing this, Sion cradled his head and bowed it.

"Wa... embarrassing... but talking about which... Iris has been by my side, watching me while I was troubled?"

The girl smiled brightly,

"Yes! Because Sion Onii-san is extremely fun! Although it was only written in story books, but that face meant that you wanted to cry, right!? This is Iris's first time seeing it! Because, because Ferris Onee-sama never cries, Lucile Onii-sama says doesn't cry, his smiling face is scary..."

Saying this, Iris's face revealed an annoyed expression.

Sion laughed,

"Ah, that's true, Lucile can be scary."

To be more accurate, it wasn't scary, but it was on the level that it was troublesome... Iris and Ferris's brother, part of the family of swords, protector of generations of the kings of Roland—the Head of the Eris family.

But protector was not very accurate. In reality, he could even take the king's life as the country's gears, a presence to protect the country.

If Lucile thought that Sion's ability to be king was lacking, then he would kill him.

And no one could stop him.

He was truly a monster...

But his younger sisters, Ferris and Iris had their adorable sides... But because they had been receiving abnormal training from the Eris Family since they were young, they lacked a common knowledge...

She had never seen anyone cry, this girl had said this. No matter how uncomfortable or sad, crying wasn't allowed. No, they didn't even know about the existence of feelings. The Eris Family was a place like this.

According to what Ferris said, if they had not grown to a certain standard, they wouldn't even know that there were other people living beyond their family walls...

Although Iris didn't seem as bad as Ferris, but...

Sion looked at Iris warmly and gestured to her.

"Alright, don't cling to the ceiling, come down."

Iris revealed an incomprehensive expression,

"Ai? You're not crying? Iris was waiting here in anticipation. When are you going to cry?"

"Do you want me to cry?"

"Yes! Because, if you cry, st...st... that, anyway, that pressure something will be gone, it's like you'll be more energetic, that's what Onee-chan and I read from a book!"

Towards Iris's trouble, Sion revealed a helpless expression,

"It's stress... But, really, I'm defeated by you. Now, listen carefully, men wouldn't cry when they are seen by someone else."

Iris seemed to be very surprised,

"Ai!? Is that so!? Then, Iris stopped you from crying?"

"Ai? No, I wasn't going to cry..."

But she ignored and Sion and pointed in a different direction and waved her arm frantically,

"Then then, Iris will go there, there! So cry as much as you like!"

Saying that, she moved at a speed that a ten year old should not have and hid behind a pillar as if she had been blown there, only revealing her eyes...

Sion sighed.

Iris's eyes were already gleaming with excitement.

"...If it's like that, there's no choice but for me to cry...?"

Iris ignored him and used a small voice to say,

"I'm ready? Iris has already prepared? You can cry already?"

Sion had no choice, he only looked at Iris. Then he stared unblinkingly, not closing his eyes, then his eyes slowly started to get wet...

Iris revealed an ecstatic expression.

"Ah-!? I saw it!? I saw it! Just now Sion Onii-san was crying! Iris knows it! Boys won't cry while they're being watched! I must tell Onee-san!"

Watching Iris who was happily jumping around, Sion wiped away the tears in his eyes and smiled, asking,

"I say, Iris, have you brought back Ferris and Ryner's report?"

As soon as he spoke,

"Oh yes! I brought it! This."

Saying that, she removed a book from the bag on her back and passed it to Sion.

Sion received the book and flipped open to the first page... Really... It was like her usual self, written in Iris's language—to be more accurate, it was a pile of illegible drawings...

Sion asked questions about every picture he held.

"What is this dog that is salivating?"

"Ah, that's wild beast-san! It's very scary! Onee-san says that it's a pervert whose saliva will make you pregnant when you touch it."

Sion nodded his head simply,

"Ah, it's Ryner."

He had already become accustomed to this...

“Then, the angel with wings who is holding the chains to the wild beast’s collar is Ferris?”

“Yes! The beautiful female angel who punishes the evil and does the good, Ferris Onee-chan!”

He flipped some pages, they were all drawings of the righteous angel beating up the beast,

“Ah~ Ryner hasn’t changed, he’s still so happy...”

Sion smiled wryly as he continued to flip the pages.

Then when he reached the sixth page, Sion’s hand stopped because he did not understand one of her drawings.

It was a strange drawing.

There was once a drawing of a house that was flying towards the sun across the sea, this was similar to that, it was another drawing that could not be understood.

This time it was...

“Eh, Iris, what is this?”

“Ai? Which one which one?”

Iris looked over.

Sion was pointing at a drawing of a large dragon growing from the ground and the beast and angel were looking at it, dazed.

Seeing that, Iris said,

“It’s that! Yes, that, Beast-san and Onee-san, looking at a dragon growing from the ground, looking indecisive!”

Sion hearing this garble, said,

“No, I understand the dog and the angel. I’m not referring to that, what does this dragon mean...” Previously, the sun, sea and the flying house had its meanings. The sun referred to the king of Nelpha, the sea was its people, the

flying house was the prince that the people supported...

Then, this dragon had to have its meaning...

“What does this dragon mean?”

But... Iris tilted her head several times, confused,

“Ai, that, I mean, that’s a dragon? It is Dragon-san. It’s very big.”

“I already said...”

But Sion stopped.

He became silent, as if thinking about something,

“Then, let me change my way of questioning. Did Ryner say something about this dragon?”

“Ah, he did! Eh, that, when they were digging holes, they found something like a dagger, then he didn’t know what to do so he threw it out, then suddenly a dragon grew out, they didn’t understand what was happening and they had no plan, so they could only escape first!”

Hearing that, Sion narrowed his eyes.

“...Relic...is it...”

He carried some happiness, but he also seemed to groan.

Iris asked uneasily,

“Ah, that, because Iris... are you angry because I didn’t do my job of passing on the information? But but, Beast-san said it was fine like this...”

Sion shook his head,

“No, Iris completed her task of passing on the information successfully. There’s no problem.”

“Really!? Then will Onee-san praise me?”

“You’ll be praised, you definitely will be.”

“That’s great! Iris is a genius~!!”

Putting aside Iris who was bouncing around...Sion smiled.

“Yes... Relic... so there really is such a thing... but, the two of them really...”

They actually threw the Relic there and didn't care about it, what are they thinking...

He smiled wryly and flipped another page. It was a drawing... of an angel brandishing her sword and a pink coloured rubbish bin where a girl was poking her head out from it, both were chasing a tired dog...

Then the tired dog finally exploded, seeming to be bitten to death by a clever rat...

Sion laughed. This seemingly clever rat always was a reference to Sion.

That meant that the girl who was poking her head out of the rubbish bin... probably was...

“Finally... caught up... Ha ha. Ryner must have been angry.”

Saying this, Sion seemed to be very happy. When he asked Iris about the rubbish bin girl,

“That, that! Onee-san, said that girl was pitiful, she was abandoned like rubbish by an unbelievably perverted man, so there's a rubbish bin! And, her mind is filled with messy pink coloured thoughts!”

Hearing this explanation, Sion experienced again that the details in Iris's drawings withheld information...

Putting that aside.

“Alright then, Iris. You must be tired after rushing back from Nelpha? You can rest for a bit. Is there anything you would like to eat?”

As soon as he said that,

“Dango! Because if I eat dango, Onee-san will praise me!”

Sion smiled. Because of Iris, he felt slightly relaxed...

But—at this moment.

“Your Majesty!”

A man... a man that Sion knew very well walked into the hall.

He had a body that looked like it was sculpted and had deep contours, and he was agile. This man who was around thirty years old, was one of the man who helped Sion during the revolution and he was one of the people who helped to contribute to the world today.

Lieutenant General Rahel Miller... was the actual way he should be addressed...

But he had rejected the position of Lieutenant General that Sion had given him,

“That is not the reason why I helped you. And this place still needs me.”

He had said that and remained in his original position, continuing to be a major. He was this kind of man.

His usually serious and stern expression was now more grim.

Miller used his deep and powerful voice to say,

“There has been information on that matter...”

As he said, he passed a file over. Sion silently received it...

In a moment.

Sion’s expression changed.

“...How can this be... is this information accurate...?”

Miller nodded,

“The one who passed the information to us is... him. If it’s him, you should be very clear of what it means, right?”

Hearing this, Sion groaned for real. He looked at the report in his hands again. There was an unbelievable matter written in there.

Iris came over and peeked at the file,

“What is it, what is it? What has happened?”

She asked... Sion did not reply,

“Iris. What are Ryner and Ferris doing now?”

“Ai? That, they said they would be in the city of Imperial Nelpha while they

waited for Sion Onii-san's reply..."

Sion nodded.

Then...

At this moment.

Talking about Ryner and Ferris...

Ryner slumped on the table, even more weakly than he had before.

They were in the city of Nelpha, Rankas.

They were in the dining room of the inn. After they had eaten a meal that made up for their breakfast and lunch, they were full and he had suddenly felt tired.

"I say, I feel like sleeping even though I just got up, is it because we've been overworked recently?"

As he finished saying,

"Overworked? Why do I feel like it's the third consecutive day that you have said that, unless I'm hallucinating?"

"No, you're not hallucinating. But you see, I've only be resting for three days? Ah, oh no. Just thinking of that makes me feel like sleeping, if I don't sleep for another hundred years, I will definitely die..."

Towards Ryner's way of saying he wanted to give up on life, Ferris wanted to say something, but,

"Oh, oh no. There's the special sales for dango at three o'clock today, if we don't hurry..."

"You are really unbelievable, you've been talking about there being special sales for dangos for these three days and that we have to go grab the chance to buy dangos?"

"Yes, this city will always have a special sales for dango every day at three o'clock. I will continue to buy them, don't mention a hundred years, in the distant future, even if I die or wither with age, I will continue."

“Yeah~ That will be a blissful life~. Just eat dangos. Just like this, if Sion’s reply never comes, then it’ll be good...”

A conversation like this.

They never even mentioned about the Heroes’ Relic that caused the dragon to grow from the ground...

“Then I’m going.”

“Buy me a set of three coloured dangos.”

“Yeah.”

As she replied, Ferris walked out of the inn, Ryner stretched lazily and without thinking that he might cause the lady boss any trouble, fell asleep.

It was a peaceful day.

Even so, several gears had started to turn.

People and people.

Country and country.

Each of them were hiding their own thoughts.

Their destinies were starting to interlock...

Chapter 4: A world beginning to awaken

In the distance, there was a sand cloud dancing.

Then there were lights...

A few, few, and another few lights emerged and then extinguished, followed by sounds of explosion.

Claugh sat on his horse and used his red eyes to observe all of this.

He used this small hill as a shelter to watch his enemies,

“Ah...Shuss. How many soldiers are there over there?”

“Around eight, nine thousand...”

“Hmm.”

He nodded slightly in response.

The vigorous battle had already started at the bottom of the hill.

They were in a place called Suriad in Roland...

The Estabul army were targeting the city of the anti-royalist forces—where Count Cleaude was staying. Like what Froaude had predicted, their numbers were about eight thousand.

Claugh frowned,

“That guy... his information is so accurate that it’s disgusting... Then how long can Cleaude’s city hold for?”

The seventeen, eighteen year old officer who had replied just now, said,

“They can’t hold for another half an hour. Count Cleaude’s personal soldiers don’t even reach the number of one thousand.”

Claugh laughed,

“Looks like Cleaude must be in a panic. He should have evacuated from the beginning. It seems like that city has some things that he does not want us to see. Never mind, it’s already like that, what do you think of waiting until they have dealt with Cleaude before we attack, Shuss?”

Shuss immediately replied,

“I’m very clear that you aren’t someone who would do that.”

Claugh said, depressed,

“Ahh? If you always use that tone as if you’re able to see through everything, then I will feel that I’m a simpleton whose thoughts are seen through by everyone.”

“That’s the charisma of Major-General.”

“Don’t speak such nonsense.”

Saying that, Claugh knocked on the younger official’s head and scrunched up his brows,

“Then, we should be going. We’ll charge from this hill and cut off their army from the side.

"After that, you can command the troops as you like. After all, we have fifteen thousand here... They aren’t our opponents.”

“It’s a boring battle.”

Claugh smiled,

“Oh, you have the guts. Battle is not an interesting matter, you should be clear on this, right?”

But Shuss used an earnest tone,

“So I say it’s boring. It’s a battle where the outcome is already decided, there’s no need to fight. I hate people dying meaninglessly.”

Claugh nodded,

“That’s that. So...”

Following that, he shouted in a voice that soldiers behind them could hear,

“This battle is our victory! You can’t die! Then,”

Saying that, he turned his eyes to their target in front of them and flicked the reins,

“Charge!!”

Almost at the same time as the command, the army started to move.

First, it was the cavalry who unsheathed their swords and charged forward, then it was the infantry led by the mages...

When the Estabul soldiers discovered this, although they wanted to immediately chant the magic that Estabul had to write words in the air...

But at this moment, the cavalry with Claugh leading them had reached their sides.

Like a knife slicing two parts, he cut off their ranks.

The Estabul soldiers entered a state of panic,

“Ro-Roland’s dogs, where did you appear from!?”

“Wu!? If they mix in like this, we can’t use large-scale magic...”

Strong, large scaled magic could involve their own people. So when using large-range magic in a battle, it was always released from a distance.

Although the confused Estabul soldiers used magic, but they were unable to decrease the numbers of the Roland soldiers.

But Roland was the same...

Actually, having ten or more mages performing a large scale magic from the distance could decrease the number of Estabul soldiers and then attacking would be more effective, and the damages would be lesser...

But Claugh didn’t do so.

“Shuss! I’m going! Try to think of a plan to decrease the damage!”

Claugh shouted in the battle. Shuss decapitated an enemy who was about to chant the offensive spell magic, then immediately started to rapidly draw a glowing magic structure,

“WHAT I SEEK IS THUNDER>>> IZUCHI!”

Lightning was released.

In a moment, an Estabul soldier who was about to cut down one of the infantry released a cry and collapsed...

Shuss checked the conditions of their side and then turned back.

“Alright! Go quickly! If Major-General isn’t quick, then the damages from our side and their side will increase!!”

But Claugh had already ridden away and couldn’t hear what he was saying.

Claugh looked around.

“Where is it?”

He muttered softly. He didn’t hold any weapons, and he didn’t use any magic, he only rode on the battlefield.

But even so...

The places where he passed by were stained with blood. The people who tried to attack Claugh all cried, shouted and released sounds of fear.

“Che... I deliberately left you with your lives... Be quiet...”

But this was not possible. Because they still live, so they still moaned...

Claugh cut down the Estabul fighting forces by himself, just like that. Then he looked at the person who was on a horse furthest from him, who was most obviously commanding the soldiers to attack the city...

There were six red stripes on his uniform near his wrist and criss-crossing green stripes.

The red stripes indicated the position they held in the army, the green lines were evidence that they were nobles.

Claugh said to him,

“Are you the commander of this army?”

The Estabul noble turned and looked at Claugh.

Claugh felt a little unhappy when he saw him.

Firm and sharp eyes. Eyes that said that he was proud for whatever he had done. He was different from those kind of nobles like Cleaude who didn't not participate in the battle but only stood to one side and scream, he had a gaze that said that he sincerely meant well for his country...

The Estabul noble said.

"You are Roland's General..."

But he didn't finish speaking when Clough started charging from the side.

In a moment.

Claugh's hand was stained with red.

Before the nobles behind their commander could understand what had happened, their leader collapsed, his body sliced into two.

Claugh gently waved the hand stained with his enemy's blood,

"...Really... Even if you are thinking for the country, don't do something like this... There can't possibly be no one grieving over you if you died..."

He gently whispered, as if moaning then he raised his head,

"Look! The Estabul commander has been killed by me!! You will find that your situation is not good either! If you continue to resist... we'll exterminate all of you!!"

He let out a shout that made even the earth tremble.

The surrounding Estabul soldiers completely lost their will to fight.

Even if they did not do so, the front lines that had been destroyed by Clough himself were wavering, and they were taken care of quickly.

Then, Shuss shouted from the centre of the battlefield,

"The general of the Roland army, Major-General Clough Klom has taken down your commanding officers! From now on, the fifteen thousand strong Roland army will raid you! If anyone dares to oppose, we will kill them immediately!"

The cry was repeated from the back...

The battle was quickly ended...

The Estabul soldiers had lost their will to fight.

But this was to be expected. Their commander being killed was one reason. The overwhelming number of their opponent was another. The unexpected attack that caused their formation to crumble was another...

But the largest reason was...

Claugh Klom, this name...

The Crimson Finger Clough...

In many battles, his hand was always stained crimson with the blood of his enemies, Clough's name was very famous because of the constant wars Roland had with Estabul.

His existence was one that was just as feared as the mage knights...

Victory was gained in a moment. The eight thousand soldiers attacking Cleaude's territory surrendered just like that.

After that, on nearly all the battles, this situation was almost the same.

As long as they attacked according to Froaude's instructions, the Estabul soldiers would collapse one by one, as if they were controlled by an invisible enormous power...

Their power decreased alarmingly.

Then finally, they were pushed back into the territory of Estabul...

In a room in Aose.

In this room, the Estabul camp was in an uproar. The nobles and the military officers were sighing in the room.

"What is going on!? Why are we always ambushed by the enemy!?"

"Can't someone think of a plan!? Why do they always know the areas we're

going to attack?”

“So, so that’s what I said! This is impossible... it was only five thousand soldiers...”

“What are you saying? Didn’t you agree with this too! You said that we would get Estabul from that hated Roland!”

“But!?”

But...

Hearing them quarrel, Noa closed her eyes.

But... the soldiers were dead. They had died without leaving their legacy. This was the truth. If it was like that, then there wasn’t any need to fight.

Everyone... was dying needlessly...

Noa creased her brow in pain.

Then she opened her eyes again and watched the nobles who were frantically trying to decide on a battle plan... even though they were already in this situation.

But they had already lost more than half of the five thousand soldiers. How should they counter-attack?

The Roland army was so strong that it made one scared.

It wasn’t only the strength of the army. Their information gathering skills were superior to their own. Where and when they would attack, that general called Claugh Klom in charge of the army seemed to predict their movements, and would always lie in wait at their targets’ territories, then ambush them.

Roland had someone who had the same mindset as Noa.

They didn’t want to see anyone else die. This was Noa’s wish, originally... but the nobles in front of her still did not want to give up. They still wanted to continue fighting.

Noa could only say softly to the man beside her,

“...How ironic.”

Salawell turned his eyes to her,

“What is it? Your Highness.”

“What is it? Is there a need to ask? Other than the fact that the enemy is saving our people... and our nobles are taking away the lives of our people, is there anything else that can be more ironic?”

Salawell revealed a troubled expression,

“Your Highness, we are fighting a war with justice on our side. We can’t possibly lose...”

“But, but we have lost, haven’t we?”

Noa’s words were slightly louder now, the nobles who were discussing stopped talking.

Their attention focused on Noa...

Noa simply bore their attention.

She met the eyes of those who were looking at her.

“This war, shouldn’t it end now? If there is no future in progressing this war, then even if it reduces the sacrifices, shouldn’t we end it here?”

But towards this,

“Wh-what are you saying, Your Highness! Your meaning is that we should do nothing and surrender to Roland like this? We can’t do that. At least we must repay them, even if it’s only a bit...”

“...Then, for this small thing, will we have to lose the lives of many soldiers?”

“But, but... only this...”

She didn’t want to hear it anymore. What was coming next she knew very well. If this continued, she would be killed as the main conspirator of the rebellion. To prevent that from happening, at least they had to create a beneficial condition that would allow for them to continue this, that was what it meant.

But, for only that, it was not possible to prevent the lives of the soldiers from suffering even more...

Noa shook her head.

“It is already enough. Rest assured. The main conspirator of this rebellion is me. The other people were threatened by me, coerced into following me... isn't this enough?”

“How can that be possible!? We can't let Your Highness bear this burden...”

“Th, then, we will go with Your Highness...”

But at this moment, Salawell interrupted the nobles' conversation with the princess.

“Please wait. As long as we do not fail, we will not have to do this. Your Highness's life, and everyone's life, there's no need to give them to Roland for nothing, right?”

Hearing this, the nobles,

“Although that is how we say it... but in this current situation... there are only slightly more than two thousand soldiers left. But the manpower on Roland's side, at least it is more than ten thousand? What to do...”

But Salawell's expression showed no signs of shrinking back; he revealed a confident smile,

“The numbers in a battle do not determine everything, everyone. Strategy, and morale... as long as we can defeat the troops led by Clough Klom, the morale of everyone will be boosted. About this point, I have a good idea.”

“Ohh!? Is that true! What is...”

Salawell nodded his head,

“Very simple. Target Roland's weakness.”

“Weakness?”

“Yes. After everyone saw the battle tactics of the troops led by Clough Klom, did anyone feel anything?”

The nobles looked at one another,

“If you're asking us what we feel...”

“It’s only that they’re overwhelmingly strong, and their movements are quite fast...”

At this moment Noa spoke.

“Are you referring to... the matter of him avoiding to kill our soldiers?”

Salawell happily nodded his head,

“Exactly, Your Highness. And, this is their weakness. On Roland’s side, to be able to gain control of Estabul quickly, they would do their best to avoid a war that will make us angry and avoid giving us a cause to hate them. And that means... What does everyone think?” As if seeking for everyone’s opinion, he surveyed the people in the room.

But everyone tilted their heads thinking...

At that moment, Noa suddenly realized.

Salawell wanted to carry out... that scary plan...

“Don’t, don’t tell me you want to...”

Just as she spoke, Salawell nodded,

“That’s right, Your Highness. It is the matter of using the people of Estabul as hostages against Roland.”

“Salawell! What are you saying...”

But he ignored Noa,

“Of course I have never really thought of sacrificing the people. But, using the people as hostages is the truth. Then, as long as they are our shields, causing the battle situation to progress in our favour, it wouldn’t be our fault. If Klom is unable to attack, then we defeat them. Not to mention... the people I lead have already taken the people of Roland as hostages, and they have caught them... at least like this, we will be able to have the upper hand in our dealings with the other party. They will also be unable to attack our base.”

Saying these kind of words...

“Ohh!”

“It’s Lord Salawell indeed! We can see the light again!”

Actually saying this...

Noa was already speechless.

What exactly, was he saying? If he did this, if he did this then it wouldn't be a problem that could be solved just by bearing the crime of being the main conspirator of this rebellion.

Using the people as hostages...

If this was able to successfully defeat Klom's soldiers, and in the future, if they were able to defeat Roland...

Then the direction had no future.

There wouldn't be a country that could prosper and have the people not looking down on each other.

Although she wanted to say that, but...

Salawell, who was standing by Noa's side,

"Your Highness. I understand what you want to say. But, there is no choice but to do this. I... want to protect Your Highness..."

Noa stared at Salawell unwaveringly,

"For the sake of protecting me, there is a need to use the people of hostages, you say!"

But Salawell shook his head, saying.

"No. I only wanted to protect you, I wanted to protect you whom I have watched grow up... that kind of feeling is one of my reasons. But the other reason is, thinking for the people of Estabul after today. If we lose to them like this, what will happen to the people of Estabul after this? They will be ravaged, invaded, and if they are tired of this, they will be killed... that is the fate of a country that has lost. I am only thinking of a way to save them..."

He was very serious. It was an determined expression that said that there was no retreating.

This mood was enough to understand. If there was a possibility, she would want to save the people of Estabul too. But,

“...Can we not let the people be hostages... Can we not let the people suffer anymore?”

“...”

Salawell did not reply.

Noa could only change her question...

“...Is there... no way to stop this...?”

“... It cannot be stopped.”

Salawell replied, then left Noa’s side. He started to discuss about the battle strategy they would take after today with the nobles.

Looking at this...

Noa’s face had a sad, but beautiful smile...

“...Is that so. Until the end, I was only a marionette monarch that was carried to the throne by someone else. No matter what, I was still... unable to save anyone...”

Noa shut her eyes again.

The fortress was situated on the other side of the plain. In the past, this was a stronghold that Estabul had constructed.

Although it was not a big fortress, it was protected by a moat, and walls fortified with magic, an impulsive attack would not be able to overcome it.

This was the base of the conspirators of this rebellion.

The stronghold was right in front of them, but... Clough was at a lack for what to do.

The unbelievable thing was that Estabul had actually caught the people of Roland, and even their own people as hostages.

He took up the document that Estabul had sent him...

Claugh had a disgusted expression,

“What are those people thinking of doing. Even if they were forced into a corner, there are some things that they can do and other things that they should not do. Can’t they even differentiate this?”

The letter sent was written like this.

First, the legion that Clough Klom is leading, has to be dispersed, and retreat. Second, release the Estabul soldiers who are slaves. If you do not listen to our demands, there will be one less head from the Roland or Estabul hostages every hour.

A simple document.

But...

“But, this is a very effective plan. The conditions that the other side is giving us, definitely can be accomplished... If they depend on this threat to deal with the difficult problem of getting Roland to surrender completely, then we also ignore the hostages and attack... But now we are unable to attack...”

Shuss commented calmly.

Claugh crumpled the letter up, throwing it away...

“What effectiveness. No matter what, we cannot lose. This will only give us a reasonable excuse to kill them. If they take the people as hostages... war criminals... it will definitely be death.”

“But, then Major-General, do we attack and ignore the hostages?”

Hearing this Clough frowned slightly,

“Ahh? Damnit, of course we can’t! Really, we have lost to them. What do we do now? Should we draw back first, then discuss this with Sion? But if we release all of the Estabul soldiers, what will we do next?”

“...After that, there would really be a full-scale war.”

That was the worst path to take...

“But we can’t give up on the hostages. If we did that, then there would be no difference from the previous king of Roland. Ahh, really, we actually have to discuss this with him, how embarrassing...”

Although he said it like that, but Claugh still turned his horse around. Seeing this, Shuss smiled,

“I quite like this Major-General who is embarrassed.”

“I hate you the most.”

Just as Shuss saw Claugh who was sighing smile...

Suddenly, there was an urgent voice,

“Major-General! The Roland soldiers are attacking the fortress of Estabul now!”

“Ah!?”

Claugh turned his head again,

“What is going on! Aren’t there human hostages there!? Did they attack on their own without my order!?”

But, the officer who had came to report cowered in fear because of Claugh’s roar and replied,

“A-About that... Actually, we’re still not sure who those soldiers belong to...”

“Damnit! Shuss!”

As he gave the command, Shuss was no longer by his side... Claugh had already galloped out.

He had to check which legion was acting on their own accord among the three thousand strong army he had.

But, there was no time to wait. Claugh quickened his speed...

At this moment, he heard Shuss calling from behind him.

“All of our soldiers are here!”

“Ah!? Then, whose legion is that!”

“...”

There was no reply. Shuss was not sure, too.

Damnit! What was going on? Think carefully. Think carefully before the hostages are killed. Can I move? Or can I not move?

If that legion was sent out by Sion's order, then he should stay at his original position and wait for his opportunity. But, if it wasn't... No, Sion had already said that the responsibility of this matter would be handed to me.

Then...

Thinking until here, he frowned.

There was only one person. His appearance seemed to appear in front of him... It was the person whose information on Estabul was so accurate that it felt slightly abnormal. He had thought that he should be on the side of the front lines...

But...

"Damnit, it's Froaude!"

Claugh spurred his horse on.

Shuss shouted from behind him,

"Major-General! It's too dangerous to go by yourself..."

But he interrupted this,

"Shuss! No matter what happens, don't let the army move! Keep the soldiers there!"

Saying that, Clough rushed by himself to the Estabul fortress that was under heavy attack.

At the same time, the Estabul side entered a state of mayhem.

"How, how can this be!?"

The nobles shouted.

This was impossible. Roland actually ignored the presence of the human

hostages, sending soldiers towards them.

The nobles glared at Salawell who was standing by Noa and interrogated him,
“What, what is going on!? At this rate, at this rate, it is already...”

“Salawell, how do you plan to take responsibility for this!!”

Salawell had a troubled expression.

“No, that, even if you want me to take responsibility... I didn’t think that, Roland would actually carry out this kind of immoral, cruel attack, ignoring the lives of the human hostages...”

“You actually said that you didn’t think of it! But this is the truth! How do you plan to take responsibility for this! Any-anymore and we will walk towards destruction! We have taken the people of Roland and Estabul as hostages... If this continues we will become criminals... it will be the death sentence! Explain to us, how you will take up this responsibility!”

“Th,that... But, it doesn’t determine that we will definitely lose...”

They argued.

Noa looked at them arguing, and sighed tiredly.

They would lose. The moment they took their people as hostages, Estabul was fated to die. In the end, it would always be like that, she had known of this deep in her heart.

No, but because she knew that the fighting style of the man called Clough Klom, she had never thought that he would pick this kind of method in abandoning the hostages and attacking so early...

But no matter what, the difference between their strengths was too much.

This rebellion itself was as if they were foolishly dancing in the hands of their enemy.

When the nobles heard Salawell’s words,

“That’s, that’s right. This doesn’t mean that we will lose... As long as we stay in this fortress, according to the negotiations, don’t stop killing the hostages, Roland might stop attacking...”

“That’s right! They think that we are not serious, so they attacked us! Then we have to show that that we are serious! Hostages...”

When they spoke to this point, Noa couldn’t stand it,

“Shut up!!”

She shouted angrily.

The nobles gathered in the hall trembled, all of them fell silent.

Noa saw this, narrowing her eyes.

Everyone, looked exhausted. It was a tired expression because of the approaching death in front of them, because of the unsuccessful rebellion. How pitiful. This should end. No... It had already ended.

Estabul, was already...

Noa used a gentle tone to say.

“Everyone, you cannot lose your direction.”

“But, but...”

Noa shook her head slowly,

“Everyone has worked hard. But, let this end. Release the human hostages. This is the best that we can do.”

“But Your Highness, if it’s that we will...”

Noa shook her head again, interrupting him,

"Although, I do not know what will the ending be... But I will do my best, to think of something, to use my own life to...”

At this moment, Salawell interrupted,

“Princess, you can’t! We can’t let our princess die alone... I will go with the princess!”

As soon as he said that, although it was not everyone... but there were a few nobles who said the same...

Noa felt, this was enough.

“I feel... happy. That I am surrounded by this many people who are concerned for Estabul... But, Salawell... and everyone, please continue to live. As long as you live, there will always be something that you can do. If you are dead, then everything has ended. Even if Roland forces us to shame, as long as we live, there is something that we can do. There will always be a method for happiness. Estabul...”

As she spoke until there...

Her voice started to tremble.

Towards what she was about to say next, she felt fear.

Troubled.

And there was some reluctance.

She had been born and she had grown up in Estabul...

She had always... always had been the princess of Estabul, praying that she would be able to create a country where anyone could smile and live. Create that kind of country, where she only hoped that the people who could be happy, would be happy. For that, she had worked that hard to learn. She had worked so hard to learn all of the many things that Salawell had taught.

But...

The ending was still this...

She wanted to cry.

What she had done, was only capturing the commoners of Roland, even the people of Estabul had been used as hostages, and hiding behind the soldiers who were fighting, enclosing herself in this city...

It was too disappointing. It should not be like this.

What she had hoped for, was not something like this...

So...

Noa suppressed her trembling voice.

She did her best not to let her tears flow out from her eyes...

But. Everyone in the hall, already understood what she wanted to say.

Some people lowered their faces, others had already started crying.

Noa smiled, saying.

“Even if Estabul is destroyed... Even if it cannot be resurrected again... I believe, there is a way for everyone to be happy... For this, I...”

There wasn't any need to say anything else.

Following this, it would be enough if I just accepted my fate.

Noa tried to prevent the tears from slipping down her face, closing her eyes...

But at this moment.

From the front of her closed eyes, there was a dark, cold voice as if coming from a dark oasis...

“This is really... troubling. I am truly touched by everyone's deep concerns for the country. But... from my perspective, I feel that if we only take Princess Noa Ehn's life as compensation for this crime, it is slightly insufficient...”

A voice suddenly rang in the hall.

This voice, made Noa open her eyes in a moment, looking in the direction of the voice.

There was a man standing in the entrance of the hall.

Black beautiful long hair. Cold, dark eyes. And, a smile stained red.

He opened his mouth,

“Yes... Doesn't everyone present feel that the best decoration for the destruction of this Kingdom called Estabul, should be a tragedy?”

Saying this kind of words...

Towards this, the first person to react was Salawell. He took a step forward, as if wanting to protect Noa, shouting at him.

“You, you, what are you!?”

The man nodded his head politely,

“Pardon me. I am Miran Froaude. I am a major of the Roland Empire army...”

At this, the nobles entered a state of confusion,

“Ro, Roland!? How, how can they reach here... Un, Unless, the soldiers outside have already... been wiped out?”

But Froaude shook his head.

“No, no. Your fellow Estabul soldiers are still fighting hard. Anyway, there are one thousand soldiers with me, while there are two thousand and four hundred soldiers protecting here... It isn’t that easy for the city to be defeated. No, even if it were taken down, the Roland soldiers would be unable to enter this city. Because...”

As he spoke until there, Froaude’s appearance suddenly changed.

No, it wasn’t a change that could be seen on the outside.

But it was... killing intent.

Still carrying that faint smile, but, his eyes, as if having the ability to kill all living creatures, was unbelievably cold.

It was the eyes of a devil.

Froaude slowly opened his arms,

“The show that is about to start here, is the last scene of the tragedy...”

As he said that, he brought his arm to the front, pointing at a noble in front of him,

“Shadows... Come forth.”

In a moment.

Something unbelievable happened.

The shadows on the floor started to swell...

“Wuah...”

He could only let out this kind of sound. No, it should be said that there could

be no other noise made. Because, his body and his head, had already been separated...

In this short time frame, no one said anything.

From the noble's head, fresh blood spurted out, staining the ceiling, walls and floor.

"Wu, Wuaaah..."

The voice stopped here again. This time it was the body. The body seemed to be swallowed by a large beast, the body and head disappeared...

Leaving only the blood that had spread everywhere.

Red, red, red.

The hall was momentarily covered with red.

"What, what is this..."

Noa could only say this aloud. Her body was already unable to move.

The nobles escaped in all directions as if mad. Then, one person, followed by another, was killed...

"Who, who else is there!? Is there anyone there! Soldiers! It's the enemy, the city has been infiltrated by the enemy..."

Halfway through his shouting, the voice was interrupted again.

This time it was the whole upper body that had been snatched away.

By the darkness... By the darkness that pooled out continuously from under their feet...

Among this chaos, Froaude wasn't dirtied by a single drop of blood, he only spoke towards the dead noble who had lost his upper body, "I'm terribly sorry. I am being rude, but the soldiers in this city are already dead. Because they might have interrupted this beautiful performance of Estabul being destroyed."

Saying that...

Noa trembled. There were at least fifty soldiers in this city... This man said that they were all dead. And he had said that so calmly.

Monster...

She thought.

No, it wasn't a human...monster...

If it wasn't, then it was a devil...

That would devour everything.

The shadows that this man called Froaude summoned, devoured everything...

At this moment, Salawell pulled Noa's hand,

"Princess! This, this has already ended. Even if it is only the princess..."

"But, but..."

Noa just opened her mouth, from the hall,

"Salawell! This, this will be blockaded by us! You have to think of something, think of a way for the princess..."

But this was interrupted.

He was killed.

He was killed!?

Salawell shouted,

"Princess! Escape!!"

"No! Everyone...everyone..."

"Dammit! Pardon my rudeness!"

Saying that, Salawell carried Noa and ran out.

"Let go, Salawell!"

"No! Please calm down!"

Just like that, Noa and Salawell escaped from the hall. Noa was carried by Salawell, looking dazed.

Why? Why would this happen?

She completely couldn't understand.

It should have been her that died, but the ones who died were the people she wanted to protect. In order for her to escape, everyone had died...

All were dead.

When they escaped from the hall, Noa had seen it.

The last person's death, and Froaude looking at her...

Using those devil's eyes to look here...

Look here...

But at that moment, suddenly...

"Princess, please come down, I'm a little tired."

Salawell said,

"Eh? ...Ah, eh..."

Noa nodded, coming down. She looked around her, this was a meeting room that was slightly smaller than the hall earlier. Although it was like that, when Noa and the others came to this fortress, the chairs and tables here had already been cleared away, its usage as a meeting room was gone. So it was easy to move the chairs and tables into the hall on the first floor and use it as a meeting room. Salawell, the soldiers and the nobles, without caring for the difference between their statuses, had laughed and said that they would use this place as a meeting room, then moved the chairs and tables there, that was a matter not long ago...

For the sake of restoring Estabul, and laughing, it really was something that had happened not long ago...

Looking at the empty big meeting room, Noa said,

"...All of it, is gone..."

But Salawell replied,

"No, there is still something left."

"Something left? What is left? Putting aside the companions, everyone who thought for this country, when we caught those hostages, we had already lost our honour. We already, have nothing."

The meaning to live too...

Not long after, that monster called Froaude would come here...

Noa did not want to escape. Even if she did not die here, what would await her would be the death sentence. Then it wouldn't matter where she died.

Everyone, was dead...

But Salawell looked at Noa, for unknown reasons, a happy smile appeared, he said,

"It hasn't finished, Princess. You still have your life, right? According to the plan, this should be so. 'The Estabul that has taken people as hostages. Roland who is unable to move against them. Then, Estabul that has been forced down this damned path, started to kill people...' Your role was to lose control, Princess."

He actually said something like that...

"Sa,Salawell...? What are you saying..."

Although she said that, but, Noa already understood everything, towards what Salawell had just said, she understood everything. She had known from the beginning, it would have been better if she died not knowing anything... She had known that, she should have died with those nobles in the hall, dying with a happy dream...

But towards what was in front of her, was the cruel reality...

This man's face that she had trusted since she was a child and understood the best, suddenly turned into someone she did not know. A meaningful but indecent smile appeared.

"Then, the one to stop this wild Estabul will be Salawell Seal, as the hero who will save the country, he will be promoted to the noble of Roland, that was what was predicted."

A nightmare...

Yes, Noa thought.

She had finally understood what Froaude's words had meant.

The stage called a tragedy...

From the beginning, they had been controlled to dance.

Estabul's rebellion too, from the beginning it was within Roland's grasp...

Towards this Noa...

"Ahh... Why did this happen... I'm really foolish... There were clearly many hints. Those Estabul soldiers were ambushed by Roland every time. If only I had noticed. Or maybe it was when Salawell, the moment when you spoke about using the people as hostages, if I had found out at that moment... Or maybe, towards that monster.... That, noticing our escape... but letting us run away... Seeing this truth if I..."

Salawell laughed,

"No, no. You aren't foolish, Princess. You merely trusted me. Even if you notice that there is something odd, you would purposefully ignore it. I... I who have been serving you since you were young, could not do something like this. Yes, didn't you think so?"

"..."

This was the truth. Salawell could never betray her. Even if it was anyone who betrayed her, only Salawell couldn't betray...

She had thought like that.

Then... Salawell said.

"You still regard me like that. So I will only teach you the beautiful things. The beautiful me, the beautiful me, the beautiful world... so you are beautiful. Unbelievably, you have been brought up as a strong, beautiful person."

Saying that, he revealed a regretful expression,

"What a waste... I brought you up to be so beautiful with much difficulty... In the beginning I had planned to use you, then marry you, to get Estabul."

"..."

Noa didn't say anything. From the beginning Salawell had... this man had been always lying to everyone.

For this fellow, everyone, everyone had died...

“But you see, Roland has promised me a position... I am satisfied with that now. Didn't Princess say that just now? As long as there is something remaining, there still can be things done.”

This fellow... Unless there would only be this kind of person continuing to live on in the end?

Noa trembled. It wasn't because of fear, but it was because of anger.

That was, reality... As what Salawell had said, this was the punishment for me who only known beautiful things...

But...

Noa slowly reached towards the dagger hidden at her back.

But... only this person could not be forgiven.

Noa...

“I... really wanted to create a world where everyone would laugh and live...”

“You're still saying pretty things. Beautiful things can never move this country.”

“Even so! I, still want to create that kind of country! Even if it is only pretty words... Even if behind some people's smiles, there will be some people crying... This wish, can't it be fulfilled!?”

Salawell laughed coldly,

“No, wishes are for free. This kind of fool will die in the end, I, who will survive, will become the hero to save this country. That's all. Then alright, it's about time...”

In a moment, Noa stabbed the dagger,

“I wouldn't die for nothing...”

Then...

Her hand was simply caught by Salawell... Salawell revealed a satisfied smile,

“Princess is very cute. Just like what I taught, until the end she is still very

pure, righteous, and, as if controlled by me, she will always make the actions that I predicted. Did you think that I did not know where you hid your dagger?"

Just by applying more pressure on her wrist, he took the dagger from Noa's hand...

Noa looked at the dagger that seemed to be glimmering towards her, falling into despair...

In the end, she was unable to take revenge.

Everyone was dead. They were controlled by this kind of person, dead...

She didn't want to die.

That was the first time she thought of that.

At least this man... this man should be...

But, she didn't have that power.

"Then, let this end. You and everyone else, will die for nothing."

He aimed at Noa's chest, stabbing the dagger down viciously...

At this moment.

Salawell's hand, still holding on to the dagger, flew away.

"What!?"

Before he finished speaking, his head went flying too. Then he collapsed on the ground...

A voice spoke.

"Yes, Salawell-san. You are really foolish. Just like what my plan was, until the end you had no ambition, so vulgar. As if controlled by me, you would always take the actions that I predicted... If he is used without any change, it would be like that? Princess Noa Ehn."

Saying that... that man walked into the room.

That, monster...

That monster from Roland called Miran Froaude...

He still had a calm tone.

He walked to their side casually, looking down at Salawell who was on the floor,

“Rest assured, Princess. Roland isn’t so lacking in heroes that it needs this kind of man to be the hero because of saving a country.”

He said.

The eyes looking down on the target that was about to be killed, as if he had no compassion...

Noa revealed a disgusted expression,

“You say hero? Roland’s hero!? A hero who does something like this!? You’re saying that someone who plays with others' thoughts, in the end mocking them, that is the way how the Hero King of Roland, Sion Astal acts?”

Froaude revealed a slightly troubled expression as he heard this,

“...That’s not it. The one who does these things... is not a hero. My King would not do this. These are my own actions. And I have mentioned this to the king... but I was rejected by him.”

“...What means, the one behind the curtains for this matter was you?”

“Yes... until this rebellion was started it was all... But the king did not select me, but he commanded Major-General Claugh Klom to suppress the Estabul rebellion... what will happen next, Your Highness who is intelligent should be clear, right?”

Noa accepted this answer.

This was the arrangement...

Claugh Klom’s way of fighting, it was that fighting style that the Roland king wished for.

Froaude continued,

“But, although I do not wish to use Salawell-san’s words, beautiful things cannot move this country... This is the truth too. So, there is a need for people like me. Your Highness, a country where people can smile and live... that wish...

I don't hate it. I don't hate people like you, too. If I were the officer or commoner of Estabul, I would choose you as king. But..."

He picked up the dagger in Salawell's hand, raising it,

"Princess Noa Ehn took the people of Estabul and Roland as hostages, and killed them, then committed suicide. That is the synopsis of this tragedy."

Noa glared at Froaude.

"Are you going to kill the hostage?"

"Yes."

"You think that King Astal who wishes for that kind of battle style, will forgive you?"

Hearing this Froaude seemed troubled again, yet carried a slightly happy expression,

"...If this isn't revealed, that would be best... But it would definitely be revealed. But... what will happen. That lord, probably would forgive me, that is what I think. That is, the strength of the king..."

Speaking until here, Froaude suddenly stopped, turning,

Then quickly jumping away from his position...

In that moment. A

man she had never seen before appeared suddenly, carried Noa's body, pulling it away,

"Miss, you aren't injured, are you?"

He asked...

It was a man with hair red as if it were burning. With sharp eyes glaring at Froaude,

"You bastard, don't joke around. Or did you want to say that you were the main conspirator for this rebellion?"

At this, Froaude gazed at them with dead looking eyes,

"I've really lost to you. Major-General Klom. I didn't think that you would reach here that quickly... How is the situation outside?"

Klom...?

That Crimson Fingered Clough Klom...?

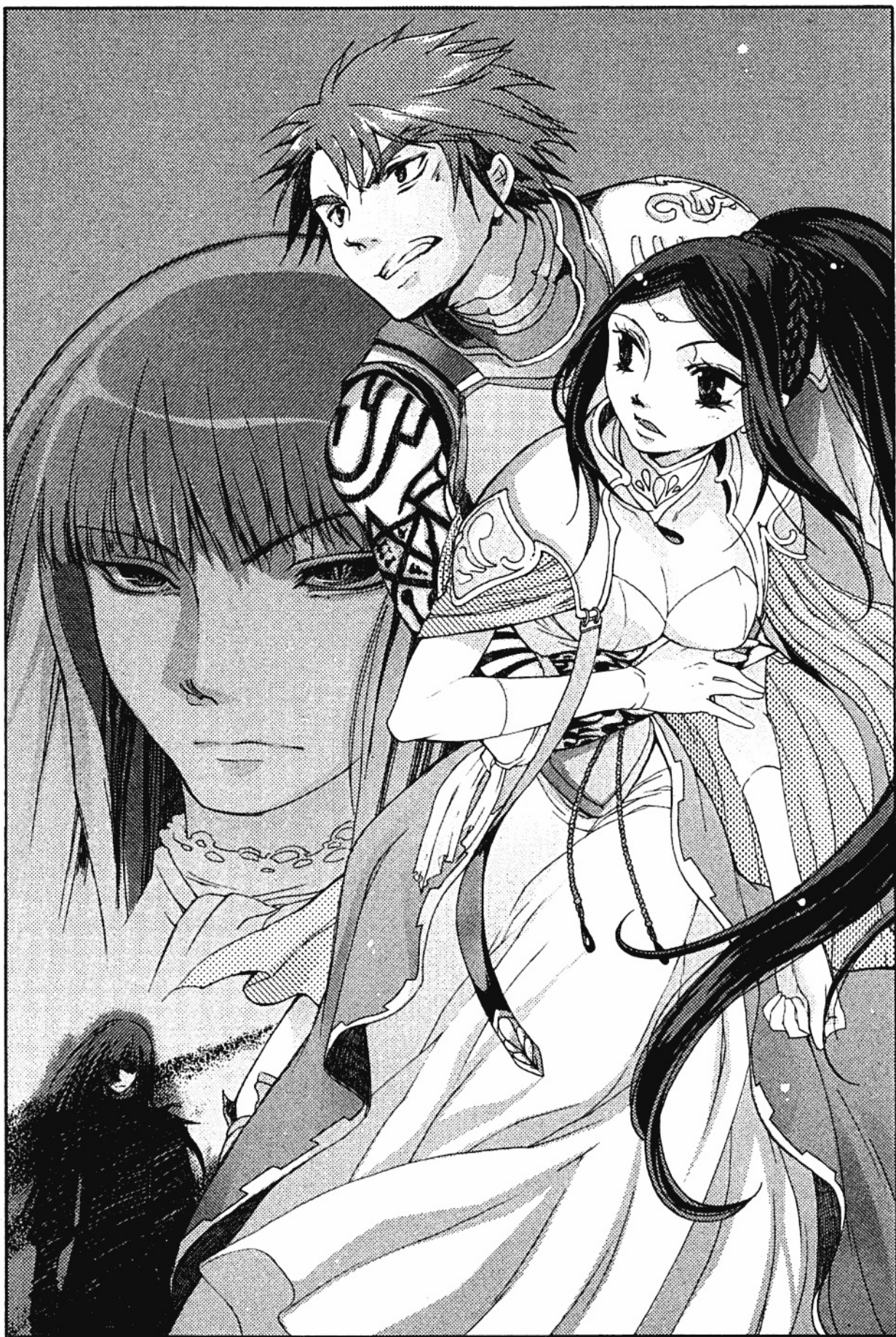
Noa raised her head to look at the man who was gently carrying her. A masculine, well featured face, boiling with overflowing anger, he certainly looked very strong, but...

But it was different from what she imagined. The Crimson-Fingered Clough Klom that had fought in their battle with Roland, causing the Estabul soldiers to tremble in fear...

She had always thought that he was a strong monster...

He was angry. Towards Froaude who had ignored the hostages and attacked this fortress. Towards Froaude who had played with the hearts of Noa and the Estabul people, causing them to start the rebellion... he was angry for them...

This was... Clough Klom...



He was someone who was completely opposite... this was Roland...

Claugh settled into a position as if he would rush out any moment to hit someone, staring at Froaude.

Then,

“Answer my question, Froaude!! According to your answer...”

Froaude laughed coldly,

“According to my answer, you will decide whether to kill me or not, right?”

“...That’s right. Sion really doesn’t need you. When I first saw you that was what I thought. You will make Sion turn strange.”

“Really, didn’t you come along willingly? Major-General Klom. But, you don’t see what that lord is carrying. No, if you continue to converse with me here, you wouldn’t even have the right to serve His Majesty.”

“...What do you know. I don’t need the right to remain by Sion’s side.”

But Froaude shook his head sadly.

“Truly, there is no need for anyone to have the right to remain by Astal-sama’s side. But that lord is already the king. When he first became the king, he was already no longer human. He became a person who has to calculate the lives of people, the numbers and importance of the side. Now, killing the hostages of Roland and Estabul. Maybe not long after, Estabul and Roland will have casualties of tens of thousands of people, if it is this kind of choice, he will kill without hesitation. The road Astal-sama is walking down is like this... so in order to protect this path, I will kill Noa Ehn-sama and all of the hostages. If you want to hinder all of this, I will kill you too without hesitation.”

Claugh released Noa, lowering his body,

“Do you think you can do that?”

Froaude spread his arms. It was that posture again. Then,

“This... is very simple.”

In a moment.

Claugh started to move as if he were struck away, using an unbelievable speed to rush towards Froaude.

Then, Noa shook her head.

“No...”

Froaude... that person was very dangerous.

“No...”

Noa could see, she already knew. Froaude’s power, was not so simple as magic. That was not a power that humans wielded...

Even if it was the Crimson Fingered Clough Klom...

Froaude raised his arm in front of him, saying.

“Shadows...”

Then, several tattoos of magical structures on Clough’s arm started to glow...

No, no, no...

Noa thought.

She couldn’t let Clough die here. This man, was necessary for Roland. He was able to support the Roland king, support this country.

For me that... The people of Estabul who have been captured by Roland, for them to be happy, he is a necessary character...

No.

I definitely can’t allow him to die here...

Noa opened her mouth,

“Froaaaaaude!!”

She called loudly. This sudden movement, made Froaude and Clough’s movements stop.

Noa saw this,

“Major Froaude. If you have to kill the hostages so that Estabul can be integrated with Roland... then let me convince them. I, for the sake of the

commoners and soldiers of Estabul, can completely assist Roland, to persuade them... Don't you think that this is a more effective way in allowing Estabul to integrate with Roland?"

Clagh heard this,

"What are you planning..."

But Froaude interrupted him,

"...What is this? Why would you do something like this...?"

"So that the hostages wouldn't be killed. And this method, compared with killing hostages, allows the opinion of Estabul to lower, this indirect method is more effective, isn't it?"

"So that the hostages wouldn't be killed... huh. But... I see. That's right, if you can persuade them, this will be more effective. You are respected in Estabul. But, doing this wouldn't there be people who see you as a traitor?"

But Noa looked at Froaude determinedly,

"It doesn't matter. If you wish, you can even kill me after that. So... so please don't fight."

Froaude revealed a faint smile. Using eyes that seemed to look through everything to look at Noa,

"...Ahh, I see. Indeed... you are an extremely clever person... it's like that. Alright. Then, I will stop now. If I continue there will be more meaningless sacrifices. I will have to quickly allow those attacking soldiers to retreat immediately."

Saying that, Froaude turned his back on them, leaving.

Clagh had a suspicious expression,

"Wait, hey... what is going..."

Just as he wanted to chase after him, Noa caught his arm stopping him. She grabbed him tightly... until Froaude completely disappeared from the room, always looking at his back...

Finally, when his body... disappeared in the deep darkness...

Suddenly her body lost strength, she sat on the floor numbly.

Claugh was shocked,

“I say, hey, are you alright?”

His voice was warm. Strong, but mixed with human compassion, using a seriously worried expression to look at Noa... Even though it was only like this, Noa would already confirm, she had not done wrong.

She sat, raising her head to look at Clough.

“No, that, what exactly happened?”

Claugh had not completely caught on to what had transpired, asked.

But Noa did not give any explanation.

She only looked around her.

Everything she had, was gone.

Her country, family, people...

But, she did not die.

She thought that.

There were still many things she had to do.

Even if, this would completely ruin Estabul...

But, the people were not dead.

Thinking of the things that she would have to do no matter what from this day onwards...

Noa pressed a hand against her head, suddenly, using a light tone,

“Ahh, really... I’m slightly, tired...”

“Ah? Are you talking to me? What happened, what happened just now...”

She couldn’t use words to reply him.

Anyway...

“Alright. Major-General Klom. I don’t have any strength in my waist, I can’t stand up. Can you help me to get up?”

“Ah?”

Saying that, Claugh had an intolerant expression on his face now, reaching out a hand to Noa...

Just like that, the last rebellion of the Estabul Kingdom ended.

Froaude had already prepared the remaining part of the script before Claugh took Noa into Roland's territory. Everywhere in the city were notices about the starting and ending of this rebellion...

Every part of Roland was filled with this topic.

That was how the script was written.

Salawell and the other nobles, had imprisoned the princess of Estabul, Noa Ehn, and used her name to commit many crimes.

But in the end, Noa, because she felt pained at the fact that the Estabul nobles had used the people as hostages...

So she was standing forward with their help.

After they defeated the nobles, and surrendered to Roland, they had successfully reduced the damage to a minimal extent.

After this day, so that she would be praised for her efforts, she would be the hero who saved the people of Roland and Estabul, and she would be given a high position in Roland...

That was the script.

This way there should be many Estabul people and soldiers, even though they were not loyal to Roland, they would swear their loyalty to Noa who was a noble in Roland... these people should increase without stopping.

No... the sign had actually appeared much earlier.

Noa rode on the horse, on the road heading towards Roland, the people of Estabul, even the people of Roland... everywhere were voices praising Noa as a hero.

Of course, compared to the majority of these voices, there were people who hated her for being a traitor, or nobles who were unhappy at the sudden appearance of an important noble. The numbers of these people increased by quite a number.

But.

There was no need to mind about this matters anymore.

Noa looked at the happy people who were praising her, she thought.

Even though she was hated, even though she was annoying. The person that should feel embarrassed by this, was no longer here.

Everyone was already gone.

The people who supported her.

The people who smiled at her.

The people who reprimanded her.

But, even so, there was no stopping her.

She would no longer be played by Salawell. She was not saying pretty words, she only wanted to create a world where anyone could laugh and live...

This time, she stepped on the fighting stage meaningfully...

“...”

Noa looked into the distance determinedly, this country's largest building.

Roland's city.

That time, she... No, at this moment no one could feel it.

What was waiting, was a vigorous change that had never been witnessed before.

The sign was already starting to appear in every land...

The location was Imperial Nelpha.

The shadow was hidden in the darkness.

Controlled breathing, a shadow that was aimed at its prey. Its movements were perfect. Its presence was gone, no one could feel its existence.

The shadow looked at its target, gathering all the strength in its body.

Its body was like an arrow, using a counter force...

“Bang! I am Iris-chan... Wa wa!?”

But, Ryner reacted quickly to the fist of the girl who had ambushed him from the ceiling, grabbing her wrist,

“Alright, alright. Can you not hit me every time you appear?”

He was already accustomed to this.

Just to reiterate this. They were now in a particular canteen of an inn in Imperial Nelpha. Ryner had his usual tired and bored appearance, grabbing Iris’s wrist he said that.

As for Iris, she revealed a despairing expression for unknown reasons,

“Ahh!? No, don’t touch Iris! If I am touched by Beast-san, in the end I will...”

But about this point, Ryner also seemed to have become accustomed to it, he carried a tired expression,

“Fine, fine. It’s that again, right? Ferris told you something like if I talked to you, you would get pregnant or if you were touched by me, you would be pregnant, something like that? Something foolish like that cannot happen so you can relax.”

Hearing him say what she wanted to say, Iris was even more despairing,

“No, that’s not it! That, eh, so, if you touch me, any-anyway no touching means no touching!”

In the end she couldn’t think of anything, Iris puffed up her cheeks adorable, Ryner laughed bitterly,

“Alright, alright. That is really impressive.”

Just as he finished talking!

Behind him... there suddenly was a surge of killing intent...

“Ah~...”

Ryner frowned, a tired face, he couldn't help but make a sound.

Then, naturally, that thing came...

There was a 'ching!' from behind him, a sword settled at Ryner's neck.

“Eh. Grabbing my sister's wrist...”

But Ryner immediately interrupted her,

“Although this might be too much, but I have to make it clear that I definitely wasn't thinking of doing something of kidnapping young girls, making them pregnant or anything of the sort?”

He said, turning around, then,

“...”

Ferris revealed an expression similar to Iris's, as if she were sulky that her words were robbed, and an sad expression as if she were bored...

Ryner sighed,

“...Or I should say, I feel that I am very scary as recently, I actually am able to slowly interpret your emotionless expressions...”

He muttered to himself.

Iris, seeing Ferris,

“Ah! It's Oneeee-saaaaan!”

Like usual, she plunged towards Ferris's chest. Ferris dodged Iris's flying attack naturally, letting her fly into the table behind her, grabbing Iris's collar, pulling her up in a posture as if she were about to be hanged, “It's really good that you came, Iris. How was your journey?”

She said to Iris who was red in her face because she was suspended by her collar.

Iris was at fault too,

“Yes! So that I would be able to see Onee-san, I came to her quickly!!”

She didn’t care that she was being slightly strangled, replying enthusiastically.

Ferris nodded in satisfaction,

“Yes, I was always in anticipation of the dangos you brought from Roland. I only wanted that every day.”

“That’s great! Onee-san also missed Iris!”

“Yes. The dangos from Wynnit’s Dango Store is really the best.”

At this moment, Iris’s flushed face had already reached a pinkish hue.

“Isn’t Iris... a good... child?”

“Yes.”

“I like... Onee-san the most...”

Then she stopped. Ryner was speechless by the unbelievable scene before him. Iris had already lost consciousness, but Ferris only nodded in agreement.

Ryner frantically asked,

“I say, hey hey, that isn’t the time to be saying ‘yes’! She’s fainted?”

“Eh? Was there something like that?”

“No, that, the problem isn’t about this situation... The problem is with everything, I complain that there is a feeling that something will happen...”

But Ferris revealed an uncomprehending expression,

“Complain? What are you talking about? I only let my adorable sister sleep normally, is there a problem?”

“No, you say that you let her sleep... Fainting and sleeping are...”

But Ferris seemed to be reminiscing the past, using a tone as if she were telling a story, calmly saying,

“Heh heh. In the past Iris was always unable to sleep because she was afraid of the dark, so she always came to my bed and for me to make her unconscious... If she didn’t sleep well, then there would be the danger of losing her life in the training session next day. I too, when I was young I made Onii-san

knock me out...”

“I say.....What kind of family do you have...”

“Eh? I feel that it is quite a normal family... Talking about which, you don’t seem to have any family. You have to know, family is like that.”

“De—finitely not!! ...But even if I retort there is no meaning...”

Saying that, he sighed again.

Ferris was like her usual self, completely ignoring Ryner’s words...

She carried Iris who seemed to be sleeping comfortably, caressing her head,
“...Seeing this, Iris didn’t seem to sleep properly, forcing herself to run here. She has to rest for some time.”

She said.

Ryner revealed a stunned expression,

“Eh? You can tell?”

“Yes. Her movements were slowed slightly. At Iris’s current age, she should be able to move faster.”

“...No, I feel that I at ten years old would definitely be unable to use my fists to attack...”

“Heh heh. Next time my sister can finally kill the world’s enemy, you who are a pervert...”

“You should at least stop her!”

Ryner shouted.

After Ryner and Ferris put Iris to bed, the two of them ate the dangos that Iris brought, sitting leisurely, then... they fell asleep.

As a side note.

Iris rushed to Ryner and Ferris’s sides without sleeping, was because Sion had an urgent message for them...

The next morning.

Iris woke up comfortably.

Then she saw Ferris who was sleeping on the same bed,

“I like Onee-san the best—!!”

Shouting that, she rushed over to hug her. Ferris’s body temperature was very comfortable, other than that,

“Yes.”

She caressed Iris’s head...

After being hugged like that for a while, she slowly felt like sleeping again...

“Huah~”

When she opened her eyes again it was already noon, Ferris shouted,

“Eh, wake up Iris. There is a special sale for dangos today, come with me.”

“Ah, yes! I’ll go!”

Saying that, she went to buy dangos, when she came back she had a dango banquet with Ferris,

“Onee-san, this is yummy!”

“Mm-hmm.”

The next day they went to a special sale and had another dango banquet,

“Onee-san, this is extremely yummy!”

“Mm-hmm.”

The following day they went to the special sale and had a dango banquet,

“I like Onee-san the best!!”

“Mm-hmm.”

The days happily slipped away as if it were a wheel quickly turning.

At this moment.

Iris suddenly recalled that she had a letter that Sion had told her to send

quickly.

Then...

“Ah, that, that, Iris, has a letter, Sion Onii-san bade me to send it quickly...”

Ferris who was enjoying the dango banquet at the side heard this,

“Letter?”

“Yes! It seems to be an important letter! So you have to read it quickly!”

“Oh. Then, where is the letter?”

“Ai!? That, that, ah, Iris, put it in that bag, it was stuck to the inside of the dango box in there!”

In a moment, Ferris narrowed her eyes. Then,

“That box has been thrown away.”

“Eh!? What, what do we do?”

“There’s nothing we can do, did you hear what he said?”

“Eh? Umm—it seemed, Sion Onii-san, was very frantic.”

“Oh, then?”

“Then, he said dragon, something like it disappeared.”

“Dragon? Ah, that meaninglessly exaggerated dragon. Then, he meant for us to investigate this matter?”

Iris heard this and hugged her arms,

“Umm, umm, it feels like he said something else important... umm—”

But Ferris patted Iris’s head gently,

“Don’t mind it. Anyway we’ll know if we go. Alright, if it’s like that then we should set out quickly. Iris, go find that Beast, tell him that Sion wants us to go to the dragon.”

“I understand!”

Answering that, Iris immediately ran to find Ryner.

As a side note.

Because of various reasons that delayed them, in the end when they set out it was two days after this...

That... a certain day after that. The lady boss of the inn carried out her weekly cleaning, found a strange high-quality letter in the dustbin. Towards this, "Ah ya, what a pretty paper. It was actually thrown in this kind of place, what a pity..."

Saying that, she picked it up. Then she moved her eyes over the paper in the letter, the letter was written like this.

The people living on the fringes of the forest where the dragon was grown, although this is unbelievable, they have been killed by someone. Then, the dragon seems to have disappeared. There seems to be something dangerous, living near there. About the Heroes' Relic, give it up. Don't approach that forest.

The words were written like that...

The lady boss read it...

"Ahaha. Dragon? It's something like a novel. But, a dragon would actually grow from the ground, what a boring novel. And the people were actually killed by some unknown person... If it were me, since it's like this, why not let the dragon be active for a little longer. Forget it, although it is pitiful, but the books written by this author can never be sold."

Using a pitiful tone to say that, she threw the letter away again.

After that, the lady boss completely forgot about what was written on the letter, returning to her cleaning.

Two days later.

Ryner and Ferris had already walked to the path leading to that forest.

Ryner walked slowly and said,

“Ai~. How troublesome... I said it before, what does that dragon count for? That thing, even we were unable to understand how it appeared, even if we are to investigate how it disappeared, I feel that we can't uncover anything...”

“...”

“Anyway, if he really minded, Sion that guy would have come to investigate this. I knew that he would bully us from the city... He must be eating delicious food~... Saying ‘the dragon has disappeared, investigate for me’, like this he is making use of us even more.”

Just as he finished speaking, Ferris who had been, in contrast, walking quickly in front of Ryner suddenly turned around,

“Eating something delicious? Is it dangos?”

“...No, there are more delicious foods in this world...”

“Three-coloured dangos...”

“I already said that you have think of food other than dangos...”

Ferris revealed an uncomprehending expression,

“Mm-hmm. Unless there is something more delicious than dango on this world?”

“Ah? At least there is in the world I live in...”

“Oh. Then what do you like?”

“Me? Ah, let me think, what do I like...”

Ryner hugged his elbows, looking to the sky as he thought.

The cool wind blew past them, he heard the rustling of the trees. The sunlight had already passed the middle, warmly... the weather was just right.

In a moment, Ryner's brain as if having a chemical reaction, made a decision.

This good weather should be used for afternoon naps!

Afternoon naps were the best!

Then Ryner,

“Yeah... I... like afternoon naps...”

Talking as if he were completely ignoring the topic earlier.

“Eh? Talking about afternoon naps, that doesn’t seem to be a food?”

“No, although it is not a food, but, it can surpass those things, it can only be confirmed that it has an impressive point.”

Ryner said.

Ferris nodded her head in satisfaction,

“Dangos too.”

The two continued enthusiastically with an unclear conversation, walking forward. Ryner was right, the weather was really good. On the path that they could see, apart from Ryner and Ferris, there was no one else. Only bird sounds, insect sounds and the wind.

There were only these gentle sounds.

“How quiet~”

Ryner murmured. Ferris nodded,

“Mm-hmm. Actually, if we drank tea here, it would be very interesting.”

“Ah, that idea is not bad. We are almost reaching the place where the dragon was growing from. When we reach there, we can rest for a bit. The tea you make is delicious.”

“Heh heh. That’s expected. The path of dangos, is a path that if you are unable to brew perfect tea, then it would be a dangerous path to walk. Alright, the weather is not bad, I can brew cold tea...”

As they continued this conversation, walking into the forest... at this moment.

“...”

Ryner lifted his head to look... he couldn’t say anything.

Then Ferris,

“...Eh. This is surprising.”

“It should be said... is that... a person?”

“It’s a person.”

“Why would he be on a tall tree?”

“He has interests in climbing trees.”

“De—finitely not!”

Saying that, he closed his eyes, then opened his eyes to look there.

That, was an unbelievable scene...

Several people were blended in with the trees.

No, to be more accurate it wasn’t like that. It was because the people received a large impact and slammed into the tree, their bodies had changed shape, limply hanging from the trees...

This description was more accurate.

It was an abnormal sight.

The corpses, there were many, many, hanging from the trees. Even so, not even one drop of blood flowed down...

“.....What is going on?”

Ryner asked frantically. But,

“ ...”

Ferris remained silent.

Ryner frowned,

“Unless, unless it was that dragon that we released...”

But Ferris interrupted him.

“Even if we think about that it is meaningless. Let’s proceed. Investigate the reasons.”

“...Yes. Let’s go.”

“Yes.”

The two of them walking to the middle of the forest.

The situation in the forest was even worse.

Not only on the trees, everywhere was filled with piles of corpses...

Men, women, children, elderly, Nelpha soldiers, apart from those, there were even wild beasts... There was no ending to the sight. Death had equally visited everything.

And there was, even though the body had been cut into two, the blood did not flow out...

It was an impossible matter.

This large number of people, these tragic deaths, this area should have been filled with a strong smell of blood earlier... but now there was completely no smell of blood.

“...Why would this...”

Ryner wanted to ask, Ferris raised a hand to interrupt him.

“Ah?”

Ryner looked in the direction where Ferris was looking at, there, in front, at the place where the dragon had grown from there were two people standing... and it was living people...

“Eh, you two are...”

The duo turned towards them, a young girl of the duo,

“Ah! You are the Nelpha Secret Investigation officers!”

The tall man, still carrying that weak expression bowed towards them,

“Ah, hello, how are you...”

Indeed, it was Kuu and Sui who they had met in a nearby Nelpha fortress.

Remembering what they had said at first, the brother was an author, and he was going to all places to search for research materials for this novel or something like that...

Ryner seeing that,

“Anyway, what exactly is this...”

But he had not finished speaking, Sui spoke first,

“What happened here?”

“...”

Being asked by the other party, Ryner could only shut his mouth. Then,

“But, why are you here?”

Kuu was like usual, energetically replying,

“You should listen to me! Sui Onii-chan heard a rumour from some place that a real dragon had appeared here, and had become a tourist spot... I felt that that was a lie, I wanted to stop him, but he said he had to come! He completely did not listen to me.”

But Sui hearing this, used a weak voice,

“But, but, Kuu didn’t you say, if there were a real dragon, you would want to see it too? And as a fantasy author, I really wanted to see the dragon...”

“Onii-san didn’t you say that you wished to be an analytical author!”

“No, no, I recently discovered that I can’t write deduction novels. A dragon suddenly appearing to snatch the princess away, then...”

Speaking until here, Kuu half-closed her eyes,

“...Although I don’t think it is possible, unless you want to write a story like a hero bravely challenging this dragon, that kind of foolish and vulgar story?”

“Ah!?”

In a moment, Sui revealed a despairing expression, as if his soul had left his body, his whole body was stiff...

Kuu sighed, ignoring Sui, looking around her...

Then she frowned and said,

“But, because of that reason we came here, but this is like a war has been waged, there are corpses everywhere... What is going on?”

Of course, being asked like this, they were unable to answer too,

“I wanted to ask that too.”

Ryner shrugged, wanting to walk nearer to the spot where Kuu and Sui were standing, the place where the dragon had grown from...

Then,

“Eh?”

Suddenly, Ferris grabbed his arm, stopping him.

“What is it, Ferris?”

“...”

Ferris didn't reply. She only used her sharp eyes to look at the place where the dragon had grown from...

“Hey, Ferris?”

Ryner asked again, but she still ignored Ryner...

Ferris opened her mouth,

“Can you explain to me, what exactly happened?”

“Ah? What are you referring to, explain what?”

Ryner who completely couldn't understand asked, Ferris revealed an annoyed expression,

"Haven't you discovered it. What that man who wants to be an author is wearing at his waist, what is that?"

“Eh? Waist?”

Ryner hearing that turned back to look...

In a moment, Ryner narrowed his eyes, using a tired voice to say,

“...Ah, that's bad... So it's like this...”

On Sui's waist, as a dagger that they had seen before. It was dagger made of an inorganic material that they did not know of. Ryner had thrown it to the ground then, it was the dagger that the dragon had grown from.

At this moment—Sui still had the smiling expression, but,

“Ahhhh, we were still discovered by you... Then, your meaning is that I should

explain why I have this?”

He had an atmosphere clearly different from earlier. Firstly, it was that he no longer had that dazed feeling.

Then Ryner looked at the younger sister Kuu...

This one, was completely different, she had suddenly turned mature... or it should be that she had become cold and dark.

Ferris said,

“That’s it. The people were killed by you, right? According to your answers...”

Saying that, she put a hand on her sword hilt.

Sui revealed a troubled expression,

“Ah ya... Even if you don’t make that kind of threat, we will still reply honestly. It seems you know many things. Telling you wouldn’t matter.”

Ryner hearing this,

“Situation? Telling us wouldn’t matter?”

Sui nodded,

“Yes. Eh, where should I start from. Simply said would be like this. The reason why we went to that fortress, was actually the same as you, if I say that, you should understand that better?”

Ryner narrowed his eyes,

“You were finding ‘Heroes’ Relics’, do you mean that?”

“?... Ah. Oh, so you Roland people call those Heroes’ Relics. I see, this calling method is a little strange. But, it’s that meaning. But, there were none in that fortress... Rhule Fragmei... Ah, no, according to your terminology it should be Heroes’ Relics. At that moment, we eavesdropped on your conversation, Ryner-san seemed to have some leads to where the Heroes’ Relic was... so...”

Hearing that, Ryner sighed, continuing,

“So you deliberately let us move... allowing us to find the relic... is that so?”

“It’s like that. Like what I thought, you found it, and you threw that thing here

for us to take, my gratitude to you cannot be expressed.”

Sui finished, smiling.

But Ryner frowned,

“...I can’t laugh at all...”

“Ah, I apologise. You have been used, so of course you can’t laugh out.”

Then,

“I’m not referring to that! You... killed almost... all of the people who saw the dragon growing here... so that they would not speak of it... so that there would not be an increase in the people who knew about the existence of the relic...”

Sui revealed a surprised expression when he heard that,

“Ai? So you were angry over that? Didn’t you do something like that? So that you would be able to possess this unknown power, let it belong to yourself. If others knew, then we can only kill...”

“Shut up.”

“No, even if you want me to shut up... it is too late. I said it would be alright if I told you this, that’s because you will be silenced by us. You heard my story from the start to the ending, so, you have to die.”

Ryner hearing this,

“You say... silenced? Do you always do this, always kill people? You people, are always like that...”

But Ferris interrupted Ryner, pulling Ryner towards her, stopping him from stepping forward,

“Mm-hmm. I am very clear about your situation. Then, before killing us, can I ask you a question?”

“What question?”

Just as Sui asked that, Ferris pushed Ryner in the back. At the same time she whispered,

“Go. I will draw away their attention, so you can quickly prepare.”

Ryner's eyes narrowed...

Ferris said,

"Who are you? Why did you start to collect the Heroes' Relics?"

Sui laughed lightly,

"Ah, so you plan to continue living, so you would ask this..."

Ferris didn't let him finish, continuing to say,

"No, actually I don't have to ask anymore. I already knew what country you were from since the start."

"What!?"

Just as Sui exclaimed in surprise.

Ryner used the energy he had been gathering, running out.

Then he started to write a string of words in the air, chanting what he had learnt from the Estabul mage knight, using his special eyes... the magic he had snatched using **"Alpha Stigma"**.

Sui seeing this,

"Eh, the magic of Roland Empire needed to use words... That's obvious, every time I see the magic of other countries, I'm surprised."

At this moment,

"I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS, LETTING THE SLUMBERING SPIRIT OF LIGHT DWELL WITHIN"

The magic was completed.

In a moment.

Ryner's body sped up.

He approached Sui at a high speed... but Sui still remained unmoving.

"Ohh, so it is a magic to raise your body's strength. Very fast, very fast... But."

Saying that, he leapt back, crossing his arms in front of him several times, constructing a net of light,

“CREATING BRILLIANCE FROM WEST, NOTHINGNESS, FORMATION...”

But Sui’s words stopped.

He looked at Ryner who was rushing towards him, the smile on his face was gone now...

“Ai? Those eyes... that red five-pointed star... Damnit! You are the wielder of **“Alpha Stigma”!!**”

“You’ve discovered that too late!”

Saying that, Ryner made the same movements that Sui had done. And it was under the effects of the enhancement magic, at an unbelievable fast rate constructing the web of light,

“CREATING BRILLIANCE FROM WEST, NOTHINGNESS, FORMATION AND SUN”

“Che... even thought I stopped halfway, magic will still be stolen... I thought that the standard of the **“Alpha Stigma”** before they lost control, in the magical eyes they aren’t powerful... It seems that this thing will be more troublesome that I thought...”

As Sui muttered, Ryner had completed the magic, a spear of light flew towards Sui, aside from that, behind Sui, Ferris was moving at a speed far superior to Ryner and swinging her sword...

Then.

“Kuu, have you prepared?”

“...Yes.”

“Then, full defense.”

“...Eh.”

In a moment.

In front of Ryner, there was a wall of ice...

“What!?”

Ryner's magic on this side of the wall, disappeared.

Aside from that, behind Sui, there was a sharp 'clang!' sound, Ferris's unbelievably fast sword had been blocked...

Ryner really suspected that there was something wrong with his eyes.

The people who could block Ferris's attack, were few... or it could be said, there should be none at all.

But, blocking her, was a fourteen year old girl.

It was Kuu.

Kuu who had turned quiet earlier, now, in her hands, was a scythe-like weapon that was larger than Ryner.

She was using this weapon to block Ferris's attack...



Ferris flipped her sword, trying another high speed attack...

But she was still blocked effortlessly, not only that, under the last large strike, in the moment her weapon clashed with Ferris's sword, there were flames.

"Wu..."

Ferris's body was flung back.

And it was a large force.

If this continued, hitting a tree or something like that...

It would be like what they had noticed when they entered the forest... that limp body...

"Ah, damnit!"

Shouting that, Ryner ran forward, hugging Ferris's body that was flying out, pulling her down.

The forces were neutralized and they landed. But the two of them still rolled several time because of the large energy...

Ferris stabbed her sword into a tree, Ryner used his legs to hook around it, standing firmly, finally they stopped.

"..."

It was an unbelievable power.

It was a power that surpassed that of humans.

Ferris used her sword to block the enemy's blow, after that Ryner had dragged her to the floor and only then the backwash of power was stopped... But, putting that aside, if Ferris's sword had not been stabbed into the tree, then if they had collided with the tree, they would be dead...

Kuu's strength, was that kind of power.

"Oh, oh no..."

Ryner moaned.

What was this person.

At this moment, from under Ryner,

“Hey, even if my beauty dazzles you, I think that picking this time to do such indecent things, does your brain have a problem?”

Hearing Ferris’s words, Ryner looked at the face of Ferris who was tangled with him,

“...I say, you, fighting with that person, you still have the time to joke?”

If it was not like this, just by their own strengths, it would be impossible to deal equally with their opponents.

But Ferris stood up,

“Time? I always have time?”

“Oh, really? Then, how free are you? Can you win against the two of them?”

Ferris nodded simply,

“Yes, it’s if you didn’t help just now, I would nearly die that kind of free time.”

As she said that... Ryner had a helpless expression,

“Is that so. How coincidental. I should say that I feel that I almost am that free too.”

Saying that, Ryner looked to the front, the duo who were standing slightly far away.

Sui and, Kuu...

No, it was Kuu.

Long hair that was a rare pink colour. That body that wore an outfit that was like a skirt but also like a one-piece clothing, was extremely slim. Her previous chatty attitude was not very obvious, and it did not suit her age, an adorable but cold beautiful features, now that she had become silent, it was even more noticeable.

In her hand, there was a large scythe, like what a death god would have.

This scythe was very troublesome...

Ryner thought.

It was completely green, the blade was made of some unknown metal.

And it was not clear what material it was made of, the hilt was carved with twisted strange flowery patterns.

That thing was clearly...

Ferris said,

“A relic. Those people are in the stage that they have already started to use Heroes’ Relics.”

Ryner towards this,

"Then, our chances of winning?"

“You?”

“...Yes. If it were Kuu alone, it would be fine but if the two of them attacked at the same time, can you think of something? That, it seems like a scythe that can increase the strength of the body, right?”

Ryner frowned.

“...Ah, damnit, there is that kind of power... How can this be the weapon of the legend of the heroes? I have never heard of the legend of this weapon... Then, it's that, just now that wall of ice was also the power of this scythe... Talking about which, the blood of those corpses, also because they were cut by this scythe, this was the reason for their blood to freeze... can it be said this way?”

“Mm-hmm. But, that power is more dangerous than imagined. Just by cutting a few times, my sword has been frozen and it has been getting heavier. The surrounding temperature is also lowering, my body activities aren't so sharp...”

“Eh. It's quite a useful weapon. I see. OK. Then let us ignore Sui, attack Kuu together. I'll use fire magic to cover you, and think of a way for you to break the formation, is that fine?”

“...We can only do that.”

Saying that, Ryner and Ferris looked at the enemy again.

At this time, Sui,

“Then, have you decided on how you will attack?”

Hearing him say that, Ryner shrugged,

“Ah, yes, we suppose so.”

“That’s great. It’s rare that there is “**Alpha Stigma**”, this is a precious thing. I cannot miss this, I have to crystallize it, then grab it.”

He said that...

Ryner hearing it,

“Ah? Wait, wait a moment. Crystallize? What is that... You, towards these eyes... “**Alpha Stigma**” what do you know?”

He frantically asked.

Sui revealed a slightly surprised expression,

“Strange, you’re clearly a bearer of “**Alpha Stigma**”, but you don’t seem to understand the situation you are in? Then, what about this?”

Saying that, he pulled out a bag, from the bag, he took out something that seemed like a colourful gemstone, lifting it to show Ryner, “It’s this, don’t you know about the crystals?”

“.....I already said... I don’t know, didn’t you hear that!”

Ryner couldn’t help but shout.

The man in front of him, knew more about him than he knew...

He knew these eyes.

These eyes that anyone would fear, curse and hate...

The eyes that had caused him to be called a monster...

Although he did not want to hurt anyone, but he had killed everyone... it was also these eyes...

I...What am I...

And the one who knew the answer was right in front of him.

Ryner stared at Sui, Sui seemed to laugh even more happily,

“Heh...Kuu, they, seem to know nothing.”

“...Right.”

“But they don’t even know this Rhule Fragmei and threw it here carelessly, that’s not odd.”

“...Right.”

Kuu seemed to be leached of emotions, a lifeless marionette, her voice was monotonous. She was completely different from Ferris, her expression was truly like a real marionette's. As if, that scythe of ice, was numbing her feeling that kind of atmosphere...

Ryner hearing that,

“You actually take me as a fool...I...”

But at this moment, Ferris,

“Calm down Ryner. We can talk about **“Alpha Stigma”** later. Now, first...”

“I know! But...”

“Just win. As long as we can control Kuu, capturing Sui will be easy. The matter about “Alpha Stigma” can be asked later.”

“...That’s, that’s true. I know, then we should quickly...”

Saying that, Ryner dashed out, but at this moment, Sui,

“Then, let me give you something good to see. That is the method to use the relic that you threw aside. The relic that is the kind of ‘changing state’...”

He took up the dagger at his waist, then stabbed it into his right arm.

In a moment.

Sui's arm trembled, then—

Wwwuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuaaaaaaaaahhhh!

A large roar.

Immediately, Sui's arm was no longer an arm. It grew a jaw, sharp teeth,

scales, red eyes... A dragon. Sui's arm had transformed into a dragon...

Sui moved it, the surrounding forest, in a moment started to burn...

Sui said.

"This is the true method of how to use it. It can according to the user's thoughts, become a weapon to burn the opponent. But, the ground has no thoughts, so the dragon that grew on the ground was completely harmless. Alright, let us start. Ah, let me say first, apart from this, I can use a weapon that is stronger than Kuu's Ailecrono's Scythe, that was what I had planned." Hearing this...

Ryner and Ferris exchanged glances.

Ryner revealed a reluctant expression,

"Damn it. Our chances of winning..."

Ferris continued, calmly saying,

"Are nil. Retreat."

"..."

"Ryner."

"...I know!"

Saying that, the two of them ran away.

There were many places they could hide in the forest, they should be able to escape.

Then, Sui spoke again at this time,

"I wouldn't let you escape. Especially, I definitely wouldn't let Ryner-san you... Alright, I should crystallize the "**Alpha Stigma**"..."

Saying that, he took out one of the gem stones, throwing it into the air,

"Resonate."

Everything changed in a moment.

Ryner remained in his original position unmoving.

“Ryner, don’t stop.”

Ferris shouted, but he still stood there...

“Ah...eh...Wha...”

Ryner felt his vision slowly turn white, turn white, the feeling of it clouding over. No, he didn’t know if it was his vision, his mind was also slowly whitening...

Everything... everything...

“Hey, Ryner, what is it?”

Is Ferris approaching me...

Or is it...

No...

This... is...

His consciousness was slowly leaving.

His consciousness was slowly leaving.

Death was approaching from his back, but he couldn’t seem to care.

He couldn’t feel anything.

Even if was anything important, it didn’t matter...

No, no... If it is like that...

No, this is your wish.

The wish for everything to disappear.

At this moment.

Ferris asked Sui,

“You, what have you done to Ryner.”

“Ha ha. I only let it crystallize. If he does not awaken, it’ll be impossible to get the crystal.”

“Awaken? What do you mean?”

“You don’t mean you don’t know? The reason why “**Alpha Stigma**” are cursed and hated by people... Mad devils... Cursed killers.”

He seemed to hear this conversation...

But this was meaningless...

No, I...

Me...aningless...

Ryner cradled his head.

“U, uah... Fe...”

He cradled his head that was starting to go blank, desperately cradling it, said,

“Fe...Ferris...escape...quickly”

“What is going on?”

“Leave...I...don’t, don’t see... this... I ... monster... will... kill... you... I... don’t..... want.....ah.....”

But, at that point, everything disappeared.

His senses were more acute, they became even more acute, all the structures of the objects on this world, were all expanded in front of him.

Using numbers, graphs, symbols to denote.

People died.

But everything was meaningless.

Let everything end.

Everything of everything.

Just like he wished.

Release everything.

Open.

Kill.

Everything.

Kill everything in front of his eyes...

“Ah, ahahah”

Unconsciously his voice slipped out. But why was he doing this? Everything was meaningless. His consciousness was clouded. It was troublesome. No matter if people lived, or died...

“Ah, ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha”

Ryner laughed, he laughed madly.

Sui used a calm voice,

“Confirmation that the bearer has lost control. Awakened.”

Ferris seeing this,

“You guys, what have you done to Ryner?”

But, Sui laughed,

“Ryner-san no longer exists in this world. Once “**Alpha Stigma**” loses control, all of their humanity will be erased. He will no longer be returning. Following this, he will destroy everything in his surroundings as if he were mad. But, before that we will kill him and obtain the crystals...”

At this moment.

Ryner’s eyes opened.

In the center of his eyes was a five-pointed star. Five-pointed star. Five-pointed star.

It wasn’t only one. There were several, several others continuously multiplying in his eyes, one of them suddenly, was released from Ryner’s eyes, heading towards Sui.

But Sui,

“That’s useless. We have already a few experiences of hunting “**Alpha**

Stigma". This mere power, as long as I use the Rhule Fragmei I have... Elemio's Comb that has the god's power can neutralize it completely."

Saying that, he pulled out the comb in his hair.

But as he waved, a strong magical power surge rushed in Ryner's direction...

But the released five-pointed star did not stop.

"Eh...?"

At the same time Sui released the surprised sound, the five-pointed star that had completely absorbed the power released, stuck on the comb Sui was holding...

Then, a sound descended from the sky...

"Analysing existence. Disappear, ant."

In a moment.

The comb disappeared.

No, not only the comb,

Sui's arm... from the ends of his fingers they slowly turned to sand, disappearing,

"This... What is this... Wuah,aaaaaah!?"

He screamed.

Frantically using his right arm that was a dragon, biting off his own arm, abandoning his arm that was slowly turning to sand.

"Ha...wu..."

Sui's brows scrunched together.

Kuu still used that voice that was emotionless like a marionette,

"Sui Onii-chan... are you still alive...?"

"Y-Yeah. I'm still alive. The blood has been stopped by cauterizing the wound... but..."

Saying that, he timidly lifted his head to look at Ryner.

“What, what exactly is that, this guy. He isn’t a normal **“Alpha Stigma”** bearer? That power just now... and that voice just now. What was he saying! Completely different from other people...”

At that moment, the voice descended from the sky again...

“Kill me? With that magnitude of power? Kill me? You will kill me with the mere power of Elemio’s Comb? The ants crawling on the ground, actually said they would kill me? Ha, hahaha, hahahahaha. Disappear. Disappear, disappear. Let everything end. Nothingness. Return to nothing.”

The voice spoke, Ryner lifted his hand, the five-pointed star released by his eyes expanded on his hand...

Sui shouted.

“Quick, escape quickly, Kuu! That, that isn’t **“Alpha Stigma”**! That, that is...”

Before he completed his words, Kuu carried Sui, with a speed that was faster than a human’s, jumped away from their original positions.

Following that, in the space that Sui and Kuu had been in, completely disappeared.

Just as if nothing had existed there in the first place...

The forest, the land, air...

Everything turned to complete nothingness...

It was an unbelievable power.

Kuu and Sui escaped like this...

But, that voice descended again.

“Even if you escape to other places, everything will turn to nothingness. α is destruction. Thou dost not create anything, dost not benefit anything, dost not save anything. Only destroy, return everything to pureness.”

Following that, the destruction started.

Five-pointed stars started to expand in every direction.

Every time every time, the world was slowly destroyed.

Forest, land, and dead people, they disappeared without a trace...

But.

Among that.

Ferris looked at Ryner.

She didn't have any intention of escaping, sheathing her sword, looking at Ryner.

Looking at Ryner who was spreading destruction in the world continuously.

Then...

"Hey, you, who are you?"

She asked this monster that had lost control.

Ryner turned back to look at her...

The voice still descended from the sky.

"Ha, haha. God, Devil. Demon. Hero. Monster. Whatever you call me. Anyway you will disappear too."

Saying that, he raised his hand. Using that, using that unbelievably powerful five-pointed star... pointing at her.



As long as that five-pointed star was released, everything would end.

This five-pointed star had that kind of power.

But, Ferris, towards this, she didn't go into a posture as if she were meeting battle, only looking.

Always looking.

Then,

"...Eh, Sui seemed to be surprised. About the matter of you not being a simple bearer of "Alpha Stigma". But this is not surprising."

At that moment, the five-pointed star was released.

Ferris retreated from that position, dodging.

The space that she had left, disappeared.

Ferris looked at this, saying,

"That's right. You aren't a simple bearer of "**Alpha Stigma**". I knew this from the beginning. Because you... aren't that kind of monster, but you are an even more evil, legendary pervert. And apart from being a pervert, you are a lazy useless fool."

The five-pointed star was released in Ferris's direction again. No, not only that. But it was sent to the surroundings continuously.

It was as if, Ferris's presence, wasn't different from the beginning, deliberately sending this destructive in all directions...

If this continued, sooner or later, Ferris would be unable to escape.

And she was unable to shorten the distance between them, only, she continued to look at Ryner...

"...I didn't tell you before, I read a page of the report that you wrote when Sion showed it to me. On it, this was clearly written. *I hate people dying. I hate killing people. I don't want to cry, or be made to cry. How does it feel to be unable to choose one's own life? The feeling of losing family? The feeling of losing loved ones...*"

Saying until there, Ferris dodged the power of the five-pointed star again, calmly continuing.

“When I read that, I felt that the person who wrote that was a fool. Saying you hate people dying? Saying that you hate people dying, hate killing people? That kind of slack person who felt tired of people’s births or deaths, and you who are a coward...”

Dodging the descending five-pointed star again, Ferris said,

“Someone like you cannot kill me. That's what I think.”

Again, dodged. Then, Ferris, looked at Ryner straightforwardly and said.

“Hey, Ryner... you wanted to move forward, didn't you? Aren’t you tired of being called a monster by people? Don’t you hate killing people? I have already dodged five of your attacks. But, the next time I will not dodge. What follows next will be up to your decision. I don't think you are a monster.

“Can you hear me? You are not a monster.

“You are my partner, slave, my friend who drinks tea with me. Not a monster. Can you hear me? Ryner.”

At this moment, Ryner seemed to react to Ferris’s voice, raising his hand.

Opening his hand with the red five-pointed star, pointing to Ferris...

Then...

Ferris used an unbelievably loud voice,

“Can you hear me, Ryner!!”

She roared.

In a moment.

Ryner’s hand started to tremble. No, his whole body was trembling...

Trembling ceaselessly...

The descending voice was similarly in pain...

“You, you guys...”

But, at this moment, Ryner opened his mouth. He also used a pained voice,

but, it was a voice bearing self-awareness,

“Damn...Damnit... Shut, shut up... the time for you to appear, has already, ended... I’m sorry... Ferris. Can you shut... my eyes...?”

Ferris seemed to reveal a slight smile, rushing to Ryner’s front in a moment, closing his eyes.

Then...

Ryner collapsed on the ground.

The energy in his body was sapped away, he could not say anything.

Ferris didn’t say anything too.

The two of them kept silent.

“...”

The sun was setting.

The light rays passed through the forest, even if it turned dark it would not be strange, but because the surrounding trees had disappeared, so it was still bright.

Ryner still lay there,

“...I... in the end I still wanted to kill you... Ha ha. This is who I am. A monster that everyone hates and curses... Apart from killing people, a monster who can do nothing else. But, I already, don’t want to kill the people that I know. So, this journey, shall end here. You can return to Roland. As long as you explain your reasons, Sion will not blame you.”

He said that.

But the answer never came.

No, there wasn’t even a presence...

“Hey, are you there?”

In the moment Ryner raised his head, someone stepped on his head from behind him, slamming his head into the ground again.

“Wa!? What are you doing... Gyaaa.”

He had not finished speaking, he was stepped on even more vigorously.

Then, from behind him,

“You say that you are a monster who can only kill? Who did you kill earlier?”

“Ah? No, earlier it was just by chance that I didn’t kill you, but you...”

“I didn’t die. No, if you really wanted to kill me, you should've been able to kill me. But, that person who was messily spreading the five-pointed stars causing trouble for everyone seemed to purposely ignore my movements. That meant... that is it. A coward who cannot kill a woman, calling yourself a monster? Don’t joke around.”

“No, no, that...”

But Ferris again, ignored his thoughts,

“I’ll say it again? You cannot kill me. If you have any complaints, I’ll cut off your head.”

Saying that, there was the sound of a sword being unsheathed...

Ryner frantically,

“I say you, earlier your words were serious!?”

“Of course. I am different from you, I can kill you, this kind of matter should be witnessed to be believable...”

“I don’t want to see it!”

A usual cry...

Yes, his usual self, Ryner smiled lightly.

At this moment, from behind him,

“Mm-hm. Alright, I’ll go and brew cold tea.”

These words...

“...Yeah, not bad... But, let us leave this forest before we talk about that, what do you say~”

Ryner said as he climbed up...

Then,

“Mm-hmm. The place to drink tea can be anywhere.”

Ferris said, completely ignoring Ryner, walking away...

Ryner chased after her slowly,

“Ah—hey hey, wait. You don’t have to be that urgent. I feel a little tired...”

But, Ferris suddenly interrupted Ryner’s words,

“Ryner.”

“Eh?”

Ryner raised his head, Ferris suddenly turned around,

“..... I’m glad you’re back.”

“.....”

Ryner shook his head weakly like usual,

“...Yeah. I’m back.”

He replied like that.

Prologue 2 -still they continue to dream

Bearing many things.

Happiness, love, smile...

Sadness, hatred, anger...

Bearing many things.

Then, it was even more necessary that they continued to progress.

It was as if there would be no possibility for one to exist if they did not progress.

No choice but to progress onwards, no choice but to progress onwards...

Even if anything was lost, there was no choice but to continue.

But.

Was this true?

Was this the best thing to do?

No matter the trouble...

The time to make the decision was near. The time to make the decision was always near.

As long as one lived, as long as one had not died.

Sion sat on the throne. Looking at Froaude who was standing in front of him, he shrugged and said,

“...Then about the rebellion in Estabul, apart from Stearead, the other nobles involved in the rebellion... Klasbel, Cleaude and Nuble are dead?”

Froaude smiled and nodded his head, “They were very brave. They reckoned

that the duty of protecting Roland could not be trusted to the soldiers, so they went to the frontlines and died honorably.”

Hearing this, Sion was unable to say anything.

Because he knew that these were all lies. Galiad, Luxiona and Berl were involved in the war and then they were killed by Froaude.

“... Then, Froaude, why did you not kill Stallis?”

“Baron Stallis had decided to support me before the war. He can still be used. But traitors will be traitors. One day, he will be killed.”

“You would kill him after you have finished using him?”

“Can’t I do that? If he continues to live, he will eventually do harm to Your Majesty. He might even kill someone important to His Majesty. Someone like Fiole Folkal.”

“...”

Towards this, Sion...

“Yes... The matter concerning Stallis will be entrusted to you...”

Hearing this, Froaude smiled, “Please let me handle it. But...you really are the true king that I have always wished for.”

“...What does that mean?”

“... Nothing...”

Froaude turned around, “Please excuse me.”

Saying this, he left the throne room. Claugh and the noble that had recently joined the king walked into the throne room just as he left.

Sion suddenly understood Froaude’s reason for leaving.

The noble was a beautiful girl...

Looking at Noa Ehn, he said, “Oh. Claugh... Hey, Claugh, you didn’t take her to any strange places, did you?”

“Ahh? What do you mean?”

Sion laughed, “What do I mean? I mean that, of course. Please don’t smear

Roland's reputation..."

"Do I look like I would do that?"

Just as Claugh yelled, Noa said calmly, "Your Majesty, Major General Klom has given me a tour around Roland. Yesterday, he even took me to a bar where I could see strippers dancing..."

A moment of silence.

"What!?"

"Claugh!!"

Claugh and Sion yelled at the same time and Noa smiled, "He didn't do anything like that. Rest assured."

That meant...

Sion laughed, "You must have accustomed yourself to Roland. I'm glad."

"Eh. This country surpassed my expectations. The people laugh happily. All this is because of Your Majesty's hard work."

"No, it's too early to tell."

Noa looked at Sion for a moment, "Yes, if Your Majesty thinks so, then there'll be no problems. If it wasn't a king who felt proud and satisfied with his country, I would not continue to say anything."

Saying this...

Sion looked at Noa.

Her eyes were solemn. It was as if she was carrying a burden, just by standing there. He could feel her intentions.

Froaude's opinion of her was like this.

"A very talented person. Very motivated, clever and strong. I personally wish that Your Majesty would take her as a concubine and allow her produce children for Your Majesty. If it is like that, no matter what, Estabul would be completely integrated into Roland... Even if you die, this country will have a good king."

He even said that...

Her determined eyes matched Froaude's opinion of her.

Although something like that had happened, she still could joke as if nothing had happened. Although she had lost everything, but she still grasped on to the matters that she had to do and continued to progress.

She could still smile at Froaude, who had taken everything from her...

She was a strong person, Sion thought.

But... Sion looked at how Claugh and Noa conversed...

Froaude's wish of having Noa become my concubine seems as if it will not be fulfilled...

He shrugged and laughed. Seeing this, Claugh said, "Why do you look at us with that kind of expression? It's so disgusting."

"No, I just feel that Claugh's relationship with Miss Noa is very good. This is very good. That was what I was thinking."

"Ah? What are you saying?"

Upon hearing Claugh's reply, Noa retorted, "Huh, is it because the other party is me that you feel unhappy about?"

"Ah? No, no that's not what I meant... Sion you bastard!"

Sion laughed, "Alright, if you still have the time, then take Miss Noa around. Don't look at me like that, Claugh, I'm very busy, you know?"

"I know that, you're so naggy. Then, Noa, let's go."

"Yes."

Watching the smiles of the conversing pair who were leaving...

Sion's expression changed into one of sadness...

"...People smiling and a country where everyone can live happily... is that so?"

He mumbled to himself as he returned to his office and continued to read the documents that Froaude handed to him earlier.

Then he looked at the letter that Iris brought from Ryner.

He relaxed on the chair as he read the contents of the letter.

As he looked out of the window, the thought that he had earlier appeared in his mind.

No choice but to progress onwards, no choice but to progress onwards...

But.

Was this true?

Was this the best thing to do?

No matter the trouble...

The time to make the decision was near. The time to make the decision was always near.

As long as one lived, as long as one had not died.

The people were laughing... the people were crying...

The time to make the decision approached.

“...Dammit...”

Sion cursed as he sat in his lonely office.

At this moment.

Talking about Ryner and company...

They were still in the city of Nelpha. They had become frequent customers to the canteen of the hostel, waiting for Iris who would bring news from Sion...

After eating a late lunch, Ryner who felt sleepy even though it was daytime, said tiredly, “Say, Ferris. From my personal point of view, I’m already very tired... I am already thinking of sleeping and eating my days away in this hostel.”

Ferris was sitting by his side and eating dangos. When she heard this, she said, “Yes. I also feel that a life of eating dangos and going to dango fairs is not bad.”

“But, it can’t be like that, right...”

“Mm-hmm. Yes. You should first think about reality. The main problem is

money. If Sion doesn't send money to us, clothes, food, living and dangos these four life necessities will be snatched away..."

Ryner interrupted Ferris, "Ah, pardon me. That is, I have a question."

"Eh, what question, Ryner."

"I understand the issue about clothes, food and living as life necessities. But... dango?"

"Of course. How would humans continue to live if they don't have dangos?" Facing the determined Ferris, Ryner said, "Ah, don't mind that. Anyway, I thought you would say that. I was only confirming my suspicions. Because we will need to organize our plan of only sleeping and eating, right?"

"Yes. Let's continue that. The problem is Sion is the main culprit. So I was thinking that we should cut down Sion's head and steal his money. What do you think?"

"Oh, that's not bad. Ah, but going to Roland is a troublesome affair. We can only trouble Iris and ask her to send the money over."

"Ah, I see, there was this method..."

It was this nonsensical conversation again.

True peace.

Just by staying here, one would feel that actually there wasn't any need to fight a war. Wouldn't it be fine if they had a peaceful life of eating and sleeping... That would really be peaceful.

But.

This peace...

Would be broken.

"Obaa-san, we're here again—!"

Upon hearing this, the lady boss shouted, "Ah, thank you for coming again!" Then she sprinted towards the front desk by the front door.

It was only a normal and unusual scene.

But Ryner frowned and exchanged looks with Ferris.

Then, “Why? Why are those guys here?”

“Eh, it must be because your character is not good...”

But that could not be heard. It was overwhelmed by an even louder voice.

Bang! When the door to the canteen burst open, that voice started yelling.

“Ahhhhhhh, we found Ryner!”

“Wa... it really was Milk? And the whole Taboo Breaker Pursuit Squad is here...”

“Luke, Moe, Lear, Lach! I’ve found Ryner!! Capture that slightly beautiful woman and Ryner quickly!”

“Roger that!”

“I don’t understand—ahhhhhh!!!”

Ryner shouted as he ran around the canteen with Milk chasing him.

Ferris sat the side, appearing to be very calm, “Oh, it’s almost time for the dango special sale. Good luck, Ryner.”

“Ah, you only think of yourself when you escape...”

But...

“I won’t let you escape! WHAT I SEEK IS THUNDER>>>—”

“Wa... This is an enclosed area, you know? How can you use this kind of offensive magic in an enclosed area... Aahh!?”

Just like that, although the situation was more complicated, but these almost peaceful days passed by...

But.

Even though it was like that, the world had started to turn.

Slowly. Slowly, it progressed.

It was as if there was no choice but to press onwards...

Going forwards.

Bearing many things.

Anyone would be sad, anyone would wish for those peaceful days...

But that was before everything started to progress.

Translator's Notes and References

Forward to Volume 2	Return to Main Page	Forward to Volume 4
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